



# Foundation Document Overview

## Lewis and Clark National Historical Park

### Oregon



#### Contact Information

For more information about the *Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Foundation Document*, contact: [lewi\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:lewi_superintendent@nps.gov) or 503-861-2471 or write to: Superintendent, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, 92343 Fort Clatsop Rd, Astoria, OR 97103-8701

## Purpose



*LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK preserves, restores, and interprets key historic, cultural, scenic, and natural resources throughout the lower Columbia River area associated with the Lewis and Clark Expedition's arrival at and exploration of the Pacific coast, and commemorates the 1805–1806 winter encampment at Fort Clatsop.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Lewis and Clark National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Fort Clatsop was the winter encampment (December 7, 1805–March 23, 1806) of the Lewis and Clark Expedition following its successful crossing of the continent, where the Corps provisioned and planned for their return journey, and was the first US military fort built west of the Rocky Mountains.
- At Fort Clatsop, members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition compiled an unprecedented amount of important scientific, cultural, and geographic information collected along their journey, including interaction with Indian tribes and previously undocumented information about the Lower Columbia River area. The resulting journals and maps are still used to support scholarly research.
- Lewis and Clark National Historical Park preserves and protects sites of the Lower Columbia where the expedition interacted with native communities that resulted in cultural exchanges and lasting impacts.
- The park protects the Middle Village (qí'qayaqilxam) site, one of the most significant known archeological sites in the Lower Columbia River area, and its associated 18,000 artifacts. The high density of manufactured European trade goods recovered at the site speaks to the role that this Lower Chinook Indian village played in European and American exploration and commercial ventures of the region.
- The establishment of Fort Clatsop became a significant part of the foundation for US claims and commercial ventures in the Northwest and set into motion subsequent western settlement.
- Lewis and Clark National Historical Park preserves and restores diverse ecosystems representative of the natural and cultural environment documented by the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Fort site**
- **Sites associated with exploration by the expedition**
- **Elk**
- **Preserved and restored ecosystems**
- **Middle Village and archeological collection**
- **Cultural interactions between the expedition and native communities**
- **Partnership with the states of Oregon and Washington**
- **Scientific observation and documentation**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Explaining why** – The Lewis and Clark Expedition’s mission reflects a variety of motivations—personal adventure and discovery, nation building, scientific inquiry, and cultivation of new commercial opportunities.
- **The influence of geography** – The geographical factors that broadly characterize the confluence of the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean (e.g., topography, vegetation, climatic conditions) have shaped the cultural adaptations of native peoples to the area for thousands of years, and profoundly influenced the survival strategies undertaken by the Lewis and Clark Expedition during their winter encampment. These factors continue to shape the lives of contemporary area residents and leave a lasting impression on park visitors.
- **Through the human lens** – The human diversity represented by members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the tribes that lived in the region of the expedition’s winter encampment, and even the traders who frequented the Pacific Coast provide differing perspectives on nature, culture, and personal interactions.
- **Through the natural lens** – Many of the plants and animals observed by Lewis and Clark during their stay at Fort Clatsop can still be observed and accessed at the park despite the fact that habitats and landscapes have undergone dramatic changes and natural processes have been modified. Through a variety of restoration projects and other means, the park strives to reestablish natural processes and return resiliency and biodiversity to degraded ecosystems.
- **Observing impacts** – Although the Lewis and Clark Expedition proved to be a watershed event in the continental expansion of the United States, it was only one of many factors that triggered change in the lives of regional native peoples including the Clatsop, Chinook, Nehalem band of the Tillamook, Wahkiakum, and Cathlamet. The natural environment inhabited by these peoples at the mouth of the Columbia River, also underwent marked change in the aftermath of the expedition.

# Description

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park consists of seven units that ring the mouth of the Columbia River, extending some 40 miles along the rugged Pacific coast from Long Beach, Washington, to Cannon Beach, Oregon. The various NPS and state park units commemorate and interpret places importantly associated with the successful mission of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and the Corps of Discovery during their 1805–1806 stay in the Pacific Northwest. The park area encompasses ancestral homelands of the Chinook and Clatsop Indians, and includes the location of the Corps' winter quarters at Fort Clatsop.

Public Law 108-387 (October 30, 2004) established Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. The enabling legislation redesignated and expanded Fort Clatsop National Memorial (authorized in 1958) to include additional sites along the lower Columbia River related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition party arrived in the Pacific Northwest in 1805 after an epic 4,000-mile trek across the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. President Thomas Jefferson therefore instructed Lewis and Clark to map the region and its geographic features, locate a suitable water route to the Northwest, document and record American Indian cultures, and scientifically describe and inventory plants and animals. The primary purpose of these efforts was to establish claim to the region for the United States and to assess potential economic assets and transportation routes.

Fort Clatsop, was the winter encampment for the Corps. Lewis and Clark used the winter encampment to update their journals and made extensive notes on the trees, plants, fish, and wildlife in the area.

The Fort Clatsop visitor center includes the exhibit of the reconstructed log fort, an interpretive center with an exhibit hall, gift shop, and two interpretive/orientation films. In 2005, a fire destroyed the 1955 replica of Fort Clatsop although the National Park Service rebuilt the fort in the same location the following year.

Among the park units are other locations along the northern shore of the Columbia River in Washington (Dismal Nitch, Middle Village/Station Camp) where the expedition temporarily camped before selecting the site for Fort Clatsop. The Salt Works at Seaside, Oregon, is another park unit thought to represent the location where members of the expedition boiled seawater to extract salt essential for the winter encampment and the long return journey. As requested by the 2004 park expansion legislation, the National Park Service partners with associated state park units.



Among these units, Cape Disappointment State Park (Washington) offers hiking, beachcombing, and other attractions. The Sunset Beach State Recreation Site (Oregon) provides one of the primary trailheads for the Fort to Sea Trail. In 2010, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park acquired the new “Yeon” unit of the park adjacent to Sunset Beach. Named for previous owner Norman Yeon, this unit provides partnership opportunities for conservation and environmental education. The various NPS and state park units comprising Lewis and Clark National Historical Park encompass a combined 1,824 acres in Washington and 1,421 acres in Oregon.