Harpers Ferry Center
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Buffalo National River

Long-Range Interpretive Plan

November 2015



Prepared by
Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Buffalo National River

Harpers Ferry Center
Interpretive Planning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In collaboration with stakeholders, the park has developed a set of recommendations for the Interpretation and Education Program which are designed to be realistic, achievable, and sustainable. The recommendations are grounded in visitor experience and management goals, connect to park themes and targeted audiences, and support the park's mission of visitor enjoyment and resource protection.

Recommendations have been grouped into four categories:

- Information, Orientation, and Visitor Services
- Interpretation and Education – Non-personal Services
- Interpretation and Education – Personal Services
- Resource Management and Visitor Protection Services

Overall strategies have been developed for each of these categories.

Information, Orientation and Visitor Services

Strategies:

- Improve orientation at the visitor center, visitor contact stations, access areas, and trailheads to ensure visitors know they are in a national park, know all their options for enjoying the park, and know how to navigate safely through the park.
- Develop a Media Outreach Plan.

Interpretation and Education – Personal Services

Strategies:

- Refocus existing personal services to support critical park management issues.
- Develop programs to reach new and underserved audiences.
- Develop curriculum-based education programs in partnership with external partners that address new trends in learning, such as Next Generation Science Standards, and that meet the needs of administrators, educators and students.
- Work with partners to expand opportunities for engaging park neighbors, concessioners, and local communities in creating and providing additional programs for visitors.
- Expand opportunities for young people to engage in park programs, learn about job opportunities, and connect intellectually and emotionally to Buffalo National River.

Interpretation and Education – Non-personal Services

Strategies:

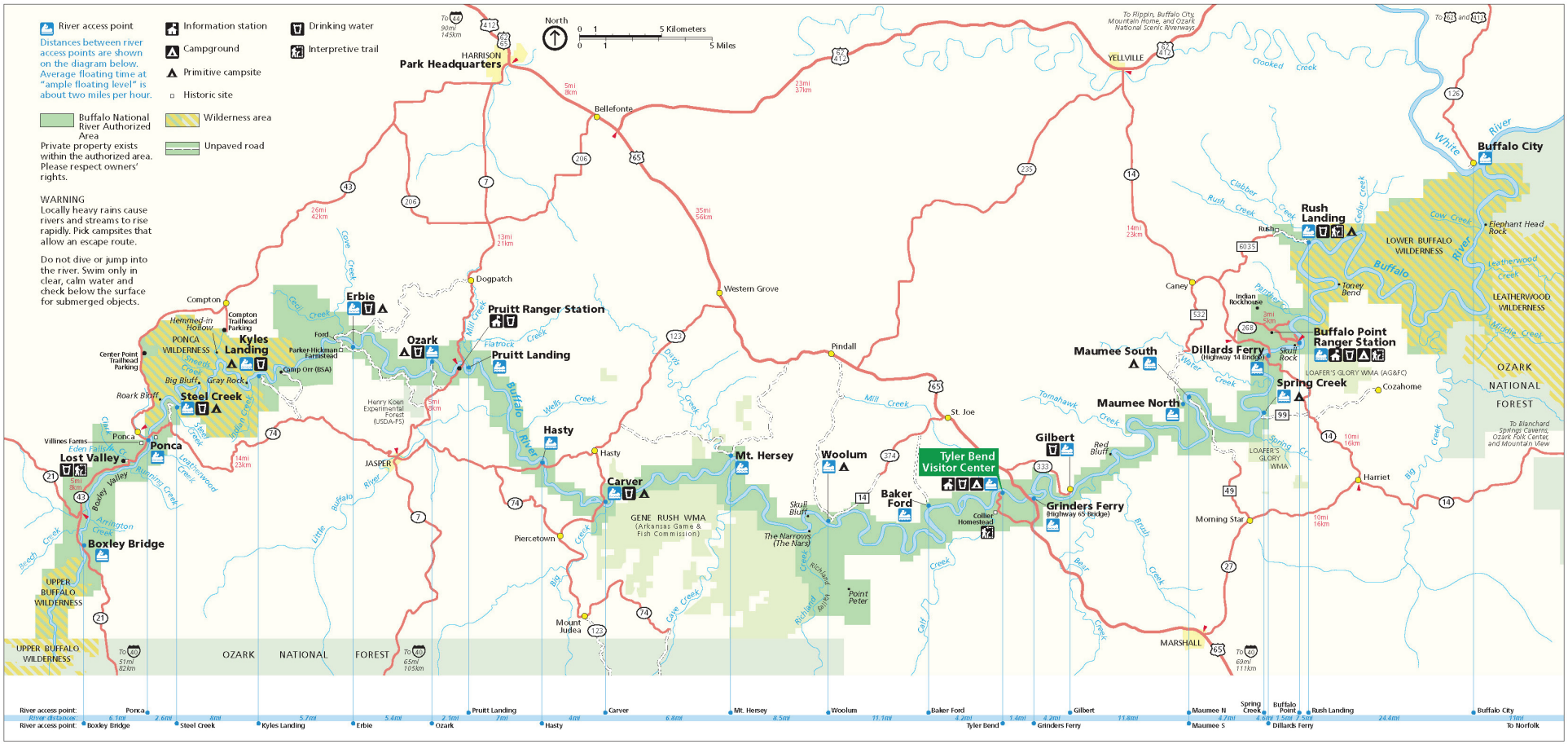
- Improve the quality of publications and other non-personal services.
- Upgrade/revise museum exhibits at the Visitor Center and Visitor Contact Stations.
- Incorporate social media and revised website technology to enhance non-personal services.

Resource Management and Visitor Protection Services

Strategy:

- Work with park partners and neighboring communities to highlight critical resource issues and provide opportunities for engagement and stewardship.

These strategies, as well as their target audiences, the visitor experience goals addressed, and specific actions proposed are described in more detail in the Recommendations section of this Long-Range Interpretive Plan.


River access point
Distances between river access points are shown on the diagram below. Average floating time at "ample floating level" is about two miles per hour.
Buffalo National River Authorized Area
Private property exists within the authorized area. Please respect owners' rights.
WARNING
Locally heavy rains cause rivers and streams to rise rapidly. Pick campsites that allow an escape route.
Do not dive or jump into the river. Swim only in clear, calm water and check below the surface for submerged objects.
Information station
Campground
Primitive campsite
Historic site
Wilderness area
Unpaved road
Drinking water
Interpretive trail
North
0 1 5 Kilometers
0 1 5 Miles
HARRISON
Park Headquarters
Bellefonte
YELLVILLE
To Rippin, Buffalo City, Mountain Home, and Ozark National Scenic Riverways
Buffalo City
Rush Landing
Elephant Head Rock
LOWER BUFFALO WILDERNESS
LEATHERWOOD WILDERNESS
OZARK NATIONAL FOREST
Buffalo Point Ranger Station
Dillards Ferry (Highway 14 Bridge)
Maumee South
Maumee North
Spring Creek
Cozahome
LOAFER'S GLORY WMA (AG&F)
LOAFER'S GLORY WMA
Harriet
Morning Star
MARSHALL
Caney
Toney Bend
Indian Rockhouse
Skull Rock
Western Grove
Pindall
St. Joe
Dogpatch
Erbie
Pruitt Ranger Station
Ozark
Pruitt Landing
Hasty
Mt. Hersey
Woolum
Carver
Tyler Bend Visitor Center
Baker Ford
Gilbert
Grinders Ferry (Highway 65 Bridge)
Collier Homestead
GENE RUSH WMA (Arkansas Game & Fish Commission)
Piercetown
Mount Judea
Point Peter
The Narrows (The Nars)
Skull Bluff
Red Bluff
JASPER
Compton
Compton Trailhead Parking
Hemmed-in Hollow
PONCA WILDERNESS
Kyles Landing
Ford
Parker-Hickman Farmstead
Camp Orr (ESA)
Center Point Trailhead Parking
Big Bluff
Gray Rock
Roark Bluff
Steel Creek
Villines Farms
Ponca
Lost Valley
Boxley Valley
Boxley Bridge
UPPER BUFFALO WILDERNESS
Henry Koen Experimental Forest (USDA-FS)
OZARK NATIONAL FOREST
To 412 90mi 145km
To 65 and 412
To 62 and 412
To 412 and 412
To 65 and 412
To 62 and 412
To 65

INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive Interpretive Planning

The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan is the basic planning document for interpretation and education in the National Park Service. These plans include guidance for parks to develop interpretive media, personal interpretive services, and education programs to enable visitors to form intellectual and emotional connections to the park's stories.

The park's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan outlines numerous actions for parks to create or sustain engaging and effective interpretive programs. The plans identify goals and objectives for visitor experiences, describe audiences and potential audiences, and provide recommendations for the best mix of interpretive services to convey park themes. All Comprehensive Interpretive Plans have three components: The Long-Range Interpretive Plan, Annual Implementation Plans, and an Interpretive Database.

What is a Long-Range Interpretive Plan?

The Long-Range Interpretive Plan defines the overall vision and long-term (7-10 years) interpretive and educational goals of the park. The Long-Range Interpretive Plan articulates the park's significance and interpretive themes and outlines recommendations for future interpretive services, facilities, media, and community relationships. In the planning process, park staff, partners, and stakeholders work together to develop a comprehensive tool that outlines visitor experiences, education, and recreation opportunities for audiences to connect to the resources and stories of a park. The goal is to promote park resource values through purposefully planned audience experiences.

This plan was built in part on the foundations established in development of the park's draft General Management Plan. The General Management Plan process began in 2008 but was halted in 2010. The park completed a Foundation for Planning and Management in late 2009, largely with information gathered during the General Management Plan workshops. Participant comments gathered from the public as well as park staff during the General Management Plan process which relate to visitor experience have been used to inform the recommendations of this Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP).

The Long-Range Interpretive Plan identifies park themes, describes visitor experience goals, and recommends a wide variety of personal and non-personal interpretive services and community involvement activities that will best communicate the park purpose, significance, and themes. It satisfies the requirement for an interpretive plan for the park as established in Director's Order #6. (http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/Dorder6.html).

Work on this Long-Range Interpretive Plan began in May 2014 with informal public discussions held at the Newton County Library in Jasper; Durand Center, North Arkansas Community College in Harrison; Buffalo Point in the park's Lower District; and Tyler Bend Visitor Center in the park's Middle District. In addition, the planning team met with park staff from all divisions at the park headquarters in Harrison. In August 2014 the planning team, composed of staff and key partners, met in Harrison to develop and prioritize recommendations.

Recommendations about visitor experience, media, services, and programming will be updated at least annually and as staffing, funding, technology, or resource conditions change. The park will conduct further planning and may create design

documents to implement some of the goals and recommendations in this plan.

The Annual Implementation Plan and Interpretive Database

The Annual Implementation Plan divides the recommended actions in the Long-Range Interpretive Plan into annual, achievable steps and simplifies the park's annual interpretive planning process.

The Interpretive Database is an ongoing compilation of park history, information, reports, plans, and inventories that assist interpreters in preparing and presenting interpretive programs and in developing interpretive media.

Both of these elements are critical components of the park's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, and are maintained by the park's Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management.

Site Description

The Buffalo River, located in northern Arkansas, was the first National River to be designated in the United States. The Buffalo River flows freely through the Ozark Mountains for 153 miles, with 135 miles included within the park boundary. The river provides recreation, research, and education opportunities in a setting of world-class beauty.

Three Districts

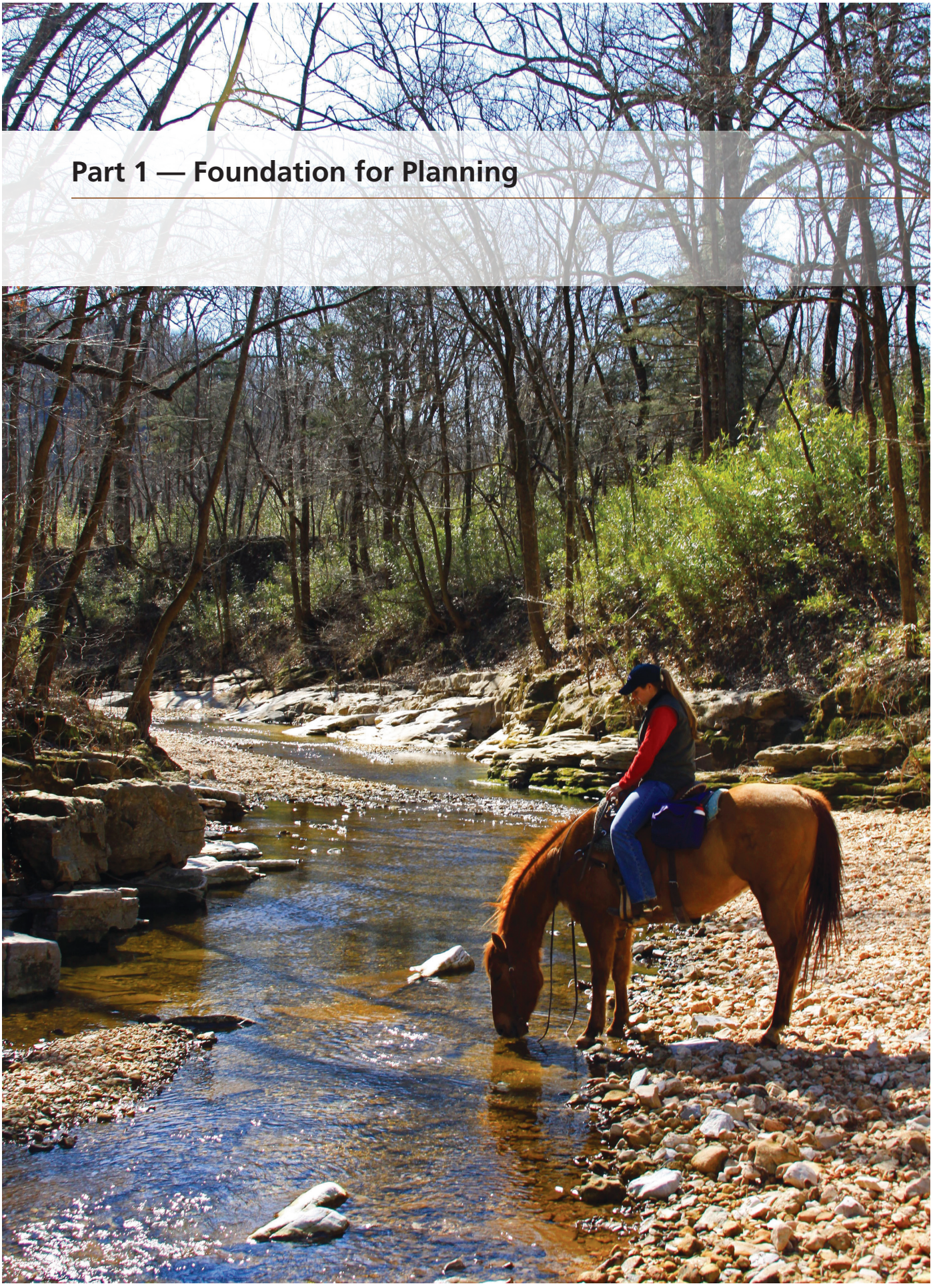
The specific resources and audiences of the Upper, Middle, and Lower districts influence the development of interpretive programs offered in those districts. In addition to unique resource character, cultural landscapes, and experiences, each district also serves distinct audiences.

The Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management manages the Interpretation and Education Program. The chief monitors each field operation to ensure that primary interpretive themes, specific initiatives, safety, and resource management messages are conveyed in a balanced manner that supports and fulfills the park's Management Goals Related to Interpretation and Education.



Gravel bars are some of our best classrooms.

Part 1 — Foundation for Planning



Winter is the best season for riding.

Enabling Legislation

Buffalo National River was established by Congress in 1972 (Public Law 92-237) as the country's first national river for "…the purposes of conserving and interpreting an area containing unique scenic and scientific features, and preserving as a free-flowing stream an important segment of the Buffalo River in Arkansas for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations…"

Park Purpose

Park purpose statements describe why an area was set aside (by Congress or the President) and what specific purposes exist for that park. Purpose statements are derived from legislation, legislative history, public participation, and public rule-making. The role of interpretation is essential to the mission of this park:

The purpose of Buffalo National River is to preserve, conserve, and interpret a clear, clean, free-flowing river and its Ozark Mountain setting of deep valleys, towering bluffs, wilderness, and pastoral landscapes. It is not one single quality, but the combination of natural, scenic, cultural, and scientific features that are protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.
2009 Foundation for Planning and Management

Significance Statements

Park significance statements describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of a park—natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, and inspirational. These factual statements summarize the essence of a park's resources and suggest why they are important enough to be considered national treasures and worthy of National Park Service designation. They help identify the stories that the park commemorates, interprets, and preserves. Significance may evolve over time as a result of discoveries and updates to knowledge about the place, as well as being stimulated by broader national and global philosophies relating to perceptions of natural and cultural areas for public use.

The following Significance Statements reflect minor edits from the 2009 Foundation for Planning and Management language:

Free-flowing River

Buffalo River is an exceptional example of a free-flowing Ozark



Enter the Tyler Bend Visitor Center.

mountain river. Undammed, it is the only river protected for its entire length within the Ozark Plateau. As a dynamic river ecosystem, Buffalo River is important for scientific discoveries and advances in ecosystem management and restoration.

Karst Geology

Buffalo National River contains a dense array of karst features, including more than 360 caves and thousands of sinkholes, sinking streams, springs, and other natural features related to karst processes. In several places the river can run underground for more than a mile in dry conditions. Outstanding examples of faulting, landslides, ore mineralization, and world renowned fossil deposits have formed during its long geologic history.

Ozark Cultural Landscape

The entire park is an outstanding cultural landscape which embraces the overall story of Ozarks settlement and history from the first prehistoric inhabitants to today's living rural community of Boxley Valley, providing opportunities to study and interpret cultural, environmental, technological, and social adaptations.

A Complex Ecosystem

The convergence of northern and southern ecosystems, the joining of western and eastern species, a rich blend of botanical communities and abundance of fire-adapted habitats, create an ecosystem recognized locally, nationally, and globally as unique.

Exceptional Recreation Setting

Buffalo National River's spectacular waterfalls, limestone bluffs, clear water, wooded canyons, and wilderness provide an exceptional setting for recreational opportunities unequaled in this part of the country.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Associated with these Statements of Significance are the park's Fundamental Resources and Values that are critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values may include features, systems, processes, experiences,



The park's visitor center at Tyler Bend interprets key themes about the history and establishment of Buffalo National River.



Elk Festival, Jasper, AR: Park staff routinely participate in local county fairs and festivals.

and stories that, if degraded, may jeopardize the park and its significance. The fundamental resources and values of Buffalo National River are:

Physical and Biological Processes

The river has sculpted a dynamic physical environment characterized by a diversity of channels meandering through narrow alluvial bottomlands, quiet pools separated by short riffles, and swift running rapids that cut deeply through bedrock and rearrange natural features such as gravel bars and islands. These ever-changing processes and conditions support unusually rare botanical communities and robust wildlife populations including more than 60 species of warm-water fish. The river and its tributaries have also eroded through 1,000 feet of sandstone, shale, limestone, and dolomite, resulting in towering bluffs, leaping waterfalls, steep-sided valleys, and ancient river terraces.

Aquatic and Riparian Habitat

The free-flowing river and its associated biological communities and natural features offer exceptional opportunities for scientific discoveries and advances in aquatic and riparian ecosystem management and restoration. Examples of innovative projects include the restoration of native river cane, the recovery of rare freshwater mussels, and the stabilization of eroding stream banks.

Fitton Cave

Arkansas' longest cave, Fitton Cave, has impressive displays of gypsum flowers and needles of uncommon size and beauty, angel hair, and pendants, as well as cascading flowstone waterfalls and other calcite crystalline formations.

Cave Environments

Cave environments provide habitat for unusual organisms with specialized adaptations, such as extreme longevity and enhanced sensory perceptions. These caves are home to three federally endangered bat species (one cave supports the largest bat colony in Arkansas), as well as translucent cave crickets, rare troglobitic millipedes, and blind salamanders.

Scientific Study

Karst features provide living laboratories for a wide range of scientific studies including global climate change, ecological restoration, hydrology, and conservation biology.

Historic Resources

The architectural and engineering legacy of buildings, structures, landscapes, objects, roads, and trails

The Steel Creek Visitor Contact Station serves visitors to the Upper District of the river.



provides the visitor with a physical connection to Ozark history and a laboratory for research topics such as pioneer homesteads, Civil War events, mining, industry, and recreation.

Archeological Resources

Among the over 700 recorded prehistoric and historic archeological sites, two bluffshelters, Cob Cave and the Indian Rockhouse, have provided pivotal information that contributes to the understanding of prehistoric life.

Ethnographic Resources

Several American Indian Tribes are culturally affiliated with the lands and resources now within Buffalo National River. European American farming in Boxley Valley and other agricultural areas perpetuates traditional activities and land use. Oral histories and photographs document events, traditions, and lifeways of Buffalo River settlers.

Wildlife Habitat

There are exceptional wildlife populations within diverse native communities that include various types of forests, woodlands, wetlands, savannas, and globally significant glade complexes.

Plants

There are more than 700 native plants, including the endemic and culturally significant Ozark chinquapin tree, Ashe's juniper and a substantial array of native flowers.

Recreational Opportunities

Every year, over a million visitors explore, enjoy, and appreciate the scenic beauty, historic characteristics, and wilderness setting of the Buffalo National River. Visitors can experience natural sounds, night skies, a sense of discovery, and magnificent scenery in a social or solitary setting through recreational activities, such as canoeing, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, caving, rock climbing, and camping.

Wilderness Experience

The three wilderness areas within Buffalo National River provide visitors the opportunity to experience solitude, mental and physical challenge, and spiritual enrichment.

Other Important Resources and Values

Fire Processes

The open woodland and savanna habitats have been sustained by natural fire processes since the end of the last glacial period.

Fossil Deposits

The fossil deposits associated with the Buffalo River demonstrate the range of life forms present in the Ozarks over the last 450 million years.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are tools that convey the most important ideas or concepts communicated to the public about a park. They identify the significance of the resource and highlight the links between tangible elements, intangible meanings, and universal concepts that are inherent in the park's resources. The themes connect resources to larger processes, systems, ideas, and values, and emphasize the relevance of park stories. They provide a conceptual framework for visitor experience planning and programming and they define the core content of the educational messages the park offers.

Interpretive themes go beyond simple descriptions or recitations of fact; they reflect the context and effects of events or processes in order to foster opportunities for visitors to experience and consider the meanings, concepts, and values represented by park resources. While themes are important as a framework to help guide interpretation and management decisions, they are not necessarily intended for public use. They serve to focus the development of visitor experience, services, and programming.

The following interpretive themes were developed for the 2009 Foundation Document, and revised in 2015:

First Impressions: Perceptions of Place

The Buffalo River landscape reveals awe-inspiring scenery and a collective wealth of nature, and illustrates a rich heritage of traditional values and lifeways that have sustained generations of people.

Motivations and Incentives: Why Visitors Come Here

The Buffalo River offers opportunities for visitors to be challenged intellectually and physically; to find renewal and inspiration in wilderness and examine their relationship to the natural world; to develop a greater sense of self and community; and to create lasting memories through a diversity of recreational and educational experiences.



A Junior Ranger going through his paces.

People and Place

Generations of people have found their needs for physical, economic, and spiritual survival met within the Buffalo River landscape, which bears witness to the people who came before us, and their ability to adapt and to preserve traditional ways of life.

Science and Education

A dynamic outdoor classroom and diverse living laboratory, Buffalo National River encourages people to learn about and appreciate the rich ecological relationships that nurture and sustain our civilization, and to understand how today's decisions will affect the lives of future generations.

A Beautiful River Preserved

Both the effort to establish a park and continued vigilance to protect the river's integrity illustrate the ability of people to work together to balance ongoing changes in land use, recreation, and conservation, and to ensure survival of this free-flowing river.

Existing Conditions

The Setting

Designated by Congress in 1972 as America's first national river, the Buffalo River originates high in the Boston Mountains of the Ozark Plateau and drops steadily over 153 miles to its confluence with the White River to the east. Buffalo National River embraces 135 miles of the river, with the rest originating in the Ozark National Forest. Only eleven percent of the overall watershed is under direct NPS management. The park's 94,293 acres are divided into three management districts with park headquarters located in Harrison, Arkansas. Park visitation averages more than 800,000 visitors per year and in recent years over 1 million. There are three designated wilderness areas within the park boundary—the Upper Buffalo Wilderness, the Ponca Wilderness, and the Lower Buffalo Wilderness.

Along the river, multi-colored bluffs of eroded sandstone, limestone, and dolomite tower in some places to more than 400 feet. The karst geology of the region is reflected in a landscape marked by numerous caves, cliffs, sinkholes, waterfalls, springs, and rock formations. A wide variety of plant and animal species, including many listed or proposed as threatened or endangered candidates, is found within the park. Hunting and fishing in the park are permitted in the enabling legislation and managed under state regulations. In addition, the park



Centennial kids at Buffalo Point.



Volunteers with the Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen Association work on trails in the park.

contains a diverse range of cultural resources and historic sites, including prehistoric village and bluffshelter sites, historic farmsteads, mining sites, cemeteries, and Civilian Conservation Corps structures. While most visitors come for water-based activities, the park also offers more than 100 miles of hiking trails and designated trails for horseback riding.

Park History

Buffalo National River was established by an Act of Congress on March 1, 1972, ending the recurring plans of the United States Army Corps of Engineers to construct one or more dams on the river. The national river designation protects natural rivers from industrial uses, impoundments, and other obstructions that may change the natural character of the river or disrupt the natural habitat for the flora and fauna that live in or near the river.

As a result of state and local interest, Buffalo National River was authorized by Public Law No. 92-237.

Full text of the legislation can be found at http://www.nps.gov/buff/parkmgmt/upload/Park%20Legislation.pdf

Park and regional staff created interpretive prospectuses in 1975 and 1986. They now are considerably out of date and do not reflect current issues such as climate change, water quality, threats to natural and cultural resources, diverse audiences, youth engagement, and contemporary visitor experiences.

Information and Orientation

Visitor orientation to the park presents some challenges. Numerous river access points complicate the park staff's ability to contact visitors; and many visitors never come to the Visitor Center on U.S. Highway 65. As a result, visitors may never come into contact with an NPS employee, instead, receiving most of their information/orientation from park concessioners. The park's concessions staff does an excellent job providing training to concessioners and their employees and also monitors concessioner compliance, but visitors have little interaction with the park's Interpretation and Education staff.

The specific resources and audiences of the Upper, Middle, and Lower districts influence the interpretation programs in those districts. For example, the most challenging river experiences are in the Upper District, while the Lower District includes larger swim areas for families. The Middle District includes the Sod-



Ranger-guided experiences at Boxley Mill include learning to grind corn.

Collier Homestead, accessed by a short hike near the visitor center, and offers numerous opportunities to learn about 19th and early 20th century farm life.

Interpretation Facilities

Buffalo National River has one visitor center, located in the Middle District at Tyler Bend. In addition, the park has two visitor contact stations. One is located at Buffalo Point, in the Lower District (there is a smaller contact station at the entrance to the camping area that has been staffed intermittently in the past few years). Park staff recently moved the second contact station, at Pruitt, to Steel Creek in the Upper District. The move was necessitated by planned highway construction that will force the closure of the Pruitt Ranger Station. Eastern National provides sales outlets at the Tyler Bend Visitor Center and the Buffalo Point Visitor Contact Station.

In addition to the three primary visitor contact facilities, Buffalo National River provides information and orientation for visitors at park headquarters in Harrison.

Combined, these facilities served a total of nearly 19,000 visitors in 2013, which is a substantial decline from the 2010 total of nearly 34,000. Overall recreational visits to the park for these same years totaled 1.3 million and 1.5 million, respectively. Staffing shortages and an increased focus on educational outreach programs led to periodic closures of the facilities, which may account for a large portion of the decline.

Toney Bend Research Facility

The National Park Service's Natural Resources Challenge program identified critical needs to establish field stations throughout the National Park Service. These needs include, but are not limited to, researcher support, classroom space, in-park logistical support, and computer access.

Currently, the park is working in partnership with Arkansas State University - Jonesboro to create a combination research and education center at the Toney Bend Environmental Education Center in the Lower District. The site's location at the edge of the Lower Buffalo Wilderness area will be instrumental in the development of new programs for faculty and students, as well as for elementary and secondary students participating in park-sponsored educational programs and events.

Arkansas State University – Jonesboro and Buffalo National River have signed

a General Agreement to establish and maintain cooperative science and education programs dedicated to understanding and preservation of the cultural and natural resources of Buffalo National River through applied, hands-on research and educational efforts. The development and maintenance of this facility, which is called the Toney Bend Environmental Education Center/ ASU Harp Field Station, will be a collaborative endeavor between Arkansas State University and the National Park Service.

The facility will increase the park's capacity to host research and educational events, and to share the gained scientific knowledge from these efforts with the public. Educational opportunities will be provided in concert with, and as a component of, scientific research and cultural resource projects supported by the Center/Station. Knowledge acquired via research can be used to make resource management decisions and enhance natural and cultural resource interpretation programs within the park and throughout the Ozark ecoregion. Participants will include Arkansas and Ozark ecoregion teachers, university faculty and students, and elementary and secondary students. Also, as outlined in the Natural Resources Challenge, Toney Bend Environmental Education Center/ ASU Harp Field Station programs will eventually grow to benefit other National Park Service units containing cave, karst, and river resources – especially those within the Ozark ecoregion.

See Appendix 3 for a more comprehensive review of interpretive facilities at Buffalo National River.

Interpretive Programs

Most visitors come to the park to float the river or hike, and many never come to the Visitor Center. In response to this situation, the park is placing more emphasis on bringing interpretive programs to the visitor, rather than devoting as much staff time to visitor center operations.

Park interpreters conduct a variety of programs, both on and off site. In 2014, park staff conducted 252 programs and special events and swore in 258 new Junior Rangers. In addition, park staff conducted 84 community programs.

Interpreters conduct formal programs at the Tyler Bend and Buffalo Point



Inside the Boxley Mill.



The Parker-Hickman homestead is the oldest structure in the park.

Campgrounds. Due to the layout of the Upper District and its seasonal use, that district emphasizes roving interpretation, but with the relocation of the ranger station from Pruitt to Steel Creek, the Upper District interpreter will conduct programs at that campground, as well.

Buffalo National River Partners Programs

Since its inception the park's friends group, Buffalo National River Partners (BNRP), has hosted a monthly program at the Boone County Library in Harrison. Although open to all, the presentations primarily interest adult audiences. Depending on the subject matter and presenter, programs have a wide-ranging degree of complexity. While generally popular, those programs that involve history, people, and places tend to attract the largest audiences. Recent programs related to water quality have attracted large audiences. Periodically, the park has supplied exhibits for the display areas of the library. Efforts to export these programs to Newton, Searcy, Marion, and Baxter Counties have met with mixed success since BNRP does not yet have a firm foothold in these areas.

BNRP also has been instrumental in securing grants through the National Park Foundation to implement the Active Trails and Explorers for Health program in the park, in which park staff and BNRP volunteers provide recreational opportunities (including river floats and hikes) for young people or those who have never experienced the park before.

Education Programs

Curriculum-based education programs are delivered through multiple venues, including school-based programs, community programs, and through the well-established Day-By-The-Buffalo programs. The Day-By-The-Buffalo programs are offered year-round, however, most area schools participate in late spring.

In addition to the interpretation staff, natural and cultural resources staff members conduct numerous educational programs for regional elementary, high school, and college students. They provide programs related to the park's critical science and resource issues and also help students understand different career opportunities in the sciences.

There has been a marked demand for programs related to current resource threats to the park. Most of these pertain to water quality threats in the

watershed originating outside of the park boundaries. Other resource program topics include the role of fire in ecosystem management, environmental changes influencing smallmouth bass and river mussel populations, the threats of looting to archeological sites, invasive plant species, the Civil War in the park, and the recent and rapidly expanding threat of feral hogs.

The public demand for subject matter specialists on these and similar topics reflects a growing public interest in factors affecting park resources. The park's Resource Management staff has increasingly recognized and appreciated the role that education serves in resource protection, whether through a single evening program, a week-long summer camp, or a more programmatic investment in coordinating research with higher education partnerships.

Park-Based Programs

Bioblitz/Citizen Science Opportunities

The park has hosted several highly popular citizen science projects. The most recent (October 2014) was held at Toney Bend and co-sponsored with the National Park Service Inventory & Monitoring Program. One of the tangible results of that program was the discovery of at least two new species of water mite in Rush and/or Clabber Creek. The park's educational partners have expressed the desire to create more citizen science opportunities at all levels (i.e., from elementary education to graduate student level). Citizen science has served to showcase the park's role as a science laboratory as well as an immersive classroom.

Ozark Unlimited Resources and Core Curriculum

Ozark Unlimited Resources Educational Service Cooperative is a facility based in Harrison that provides assistance to public schools in a large area of north central Arkansas. The general mission of all Educational Service Cooperatives, including Ozark Unlimited Resources, is to enhance professional development for educators by promoting coordination among school districts and with the Department of Education. The centers also foster public/private sector educational partnerships.

Buffalo National River's relationship with Ozark Unlimited Resources began several years ago with the desire to create a partnership-driven summer environmental education opportunity. The National Park Service



Ranger-guided experiences take hold at the Boxley Mill.

collaborated with Ozark Unlimited Resources and Arkansas Game & Fish Commission to create the Stream Ecology Camp. The success of this program led to the creation of a summer Cave Ecology Camp in 2015, in partnership with the Cave Research Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Both camps provide immersive experiences for secondary students to learn about the importance of the water resources, karst systems, and environmental systems of the area.

The dialogue between Ozark Unlimited Resources and Buffalo National River continues to develop out of a desire to meet as many of the science core standards as possible. This partnership has increased opportunities for STEM-learning (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) experiences within the park.

Day-By-The Buffalo

Day-By-The-Buffalo programs are offered on a year-round basis in an effort to remove some of the pressure during the spring when the program is in highest demand. Area public schools and homeschool students are the primary audiences for this program. Educators have the option to select from among several cultural and natural resource topics. The programs are designed to be hands-on students collect macro invertebrates from the river, and tour historic structures in Boxley Mill, among other activities. Although some home schools take advantage of the year-round option, the public school need to fill in the interim between the end of standardized testing and the end of the school year continues to concentrate Day-By-The-Buffalo programs in late April and May every year.

School-Based Programs

With public schools' increasing difficulty in securing transportation and time for field-based learning experiences, the park has at times permitted short-term closures of the visitor center and visitor contact stations in order to provide staff to offer school-based programs. In particular, the park took advantage of the opportunity to provide in class pre- and post-visit programs for classes participating in Day-by-the-Buffalo programs, and also embraced other school program requests (such as for Arkansas Heritage Week). Closing visitor facilities, however, limits services for visitors and lowers visitation, so the park has had to evaluate each request for a school-



Kayaks are becoming increasingly popular.



One of the park's key educational partnerships is with the Ponca Elk Education Center.

based program on a case by case basis.

In 2015, the park received distance learning technology equipment and hopes to provide programs for schools in the region and beyond, while reducing staff travel time and visitor facility closures.

Interpretive Media

Interpretive exhibits at Buffalo National River are generally well done, but they are dated. The newest exhibits are located in the Tyler Bend Visitor Center. They are now about 20 years old and do not reflect current issues at the park, including water quality in light of agricultural impacts, the impact of climate change, threatened and endangered species, and other areas of concern for the park and its resources. New, but informal, exhibits at Buffalo Point Contact Station have replaced the nearly 30 year old ones but require a more formal design and update in content and message. The Steel Creek Contact Station does not have any formal interpretive exhibits but does provide basic park orientation materials and some interactive props such as minerals and animal hides.

Park publications include the Unigrid brochure which was last updated in 2012. The park also produces Currents, a biennial newspaper with a mixture of interpretation and information for park visitors. The newspaper is in high demand among current and future park visitors and is an effective medium for providing updates to regulations, safety, and critical resource management issues. Visitors often request copies in order to plan their visits. Other publications include a variety of downloadable trail maps with information about hiking trails in the park.

Park staff maintain the park website and update it with information for visitors such as current river level information, "Pack it in/Pack it out" guidelines, and other timely topics. Park Staff also maintain a Facebook page and Twitter account.

There are numerous wayside exhibits throughout the park that interpret the park's scenic and cultural resources. The self-guided tour at Rush, in particular, is extremely popular. Wayside exhibits about elk in Boxley Valley also are popular among visitors. Because many historic sites, in particular, are remote, waysides often are the primary means of providing interpretation for hikers and others who visit those areas. A series of

Buffalo Point's visitor contact station is part of the old Buffalo River State Park.



new waysides and updated bulletin boards and fee stations are slated for installation in the fall of 2015.

Accessibility and Special Populations

The Visitor Center is generally barrier-free for visitors with mobility impairments. The two contact stations at Buffalo Point and Steel Creek, however, have some barriers due to the age of the historic structures. The park's maintenance division has begun to bring park facilities in line with universal design principles to alleviate these issues. None of the film media shown at the visitor center and Buffalo Point contact station are captioned and the exhibits and other programs may provide challenges for those with mobility, visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments. In 2014 the makers of the first film on the park, "Buffalo River: A National Treasure" embarked on a 25-year-later update which will focus on many new themes such as resource management challenges. This product will be fully compliant with standards from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

More about National Park Service accessibility guidelines can be found at http://www.NationalParkService.gov/hfc/accessibility/accessibilityGuideVersion2.1.pdf.

Volunteers

The District Interpreter for the Lower District serves as the park's volunteer coordinator. Teams of volunteers, including groups such as the Buffalo River Backcountry Horsemen, Ozark Society, Arkansas Canoe Club, and Buffalo National River Partners participate in trail maintenance, river clean-ups, Search and Rescue operations, and fundraising for the park.

Refer to Appendix 2 for the park's most recent volunteer statistics.

Interpretive Partners

One of the strongest gains in recent years is the establishment of educational partnerships among like-minded groups including the Arkansas Master Naturalists, Friends of the Rivers, Trout Unlimited, Frogwatch, and Ozark Unlimited Resources. Buffalo National River Partners serves as the park's friends group. Through the Active Trails grant from the National Parks Foundation, wellness-based programs including caving, hiking, and water-based recreation are being facilitated in conjunction with Hometown Health initiatives. In addition, the park has developed new agreements with Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to assist in promoting Centennial events and programs.

See Appendix 3 for more detailed information on the park's interpretive partners.

Audiences

Audiences may be categorized into segments if they require communication in a way distinct from that of the general park audience such as with school groups. Factors the park includes in an analysis of audience segments include the visitor's level of education, learning styles, languages, cultural traditions, and/or time available for interaction, among others.

By far, the largest group of visitors to the park are the numerous small and family groups who come to float the river in season. Visitation does tend to be different from one district to the next, as more adventurous paddlers are attracted to the Upper District which provides a more challenging experience. Visitation to the Upper District is heaviest in early spring when the water levels are sufficient to float, but tends to move downriver as the spring and summer progresses and water levels decrease.

Horse riders comprise another important visitor group to the area and the park includes numerous horse trails. Other visitors enjoy the hiking trails and campgrounds in each of the districts. The season tends to run well into the fall when thousands of people come to Boxley Valley to view the elk herds.

While all visitors are welcome and invited to participate, some audiences are targeted for focused attention because they may be inadequately served by existing interpretation, need different strategies for engagement, or require specific methods to open communications and sustain relationships. These may include curriculum-based education groups or new or underserved audiences, among others.

Current audience segments include:

- General Audiences. This is the "typical" audience of mixed characteristics that visits the park. It includes recreational visitors: canoeists and kayakers, hikers, photographers, campers, and equestrians. This group also includes experienced recreational users, those who may be new to the river, but are highly skilled in their recreational pursuits, as well as hunting and fishing users.



Ranger-guided tours of the historic Sod Collier homestead.

October 2014 Invertebrate Bioblitz at the Toney Bend Environmental Education Center.



- Curriculum-based Audiences. These educational groups access park programs, such as Day-By-The-Buffalo, to support the school's curriculum goals. This audience can include distance learning groups.
- Park Neighbors and Partners. This includes those living in immediately adjacent communities with strong ties to the park, as well as regional residents which may include individuals and members of organizations instrumental in the establishment of the park. This group also includes local business interests, including concessions, local chambers of commerce and tourism partners, as well as partner agencies and volunteer groups. This group also includes multi-generational family groups and large groups. This group also includes multi-generational family groups and large groups, church groups, family reunions, and youth events, many from the local or regional area. Many of these visits involve not only day-use, but camping or lodging as well.
- New or Underserved Audiences. This group includes culturally and economically diverse audiences, as well as non-English speakers and readers. This group also includes new audiences who have not become engaged with the park's stories or resources.

See Appendix 4 for a more complete review of current park audiences.

These are some of the ways audiences seek to experience the park:

- Share nature with their children.
- Have a safe place to experience a variety of recreational activities – canoeing, kayaking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, picnicking, swimming, hiking – with family and friends.
- Participate in rewarding educational and volunteer service experiences that allow them to contribute to something larger while learning something new about the park.
- Learn about the effects of climate change and other important critical issues in an engaging way with interesting scientists or inspirational motivational speakers.
- Take a hike, float, or cave tour with a ranger.

- Experience quiet and the sounds of nature.
- Have opportunities for authentic wilderness experiences.
- Explore caves.
- See park wildlife and plants; learn about their habitats and their diversity.
- Learn about the successive waves of people who first lived in, explored, and ultimately settled the area.
- Engage in family-oriented, multi-generational activities.
- Be informed about suggested hikes/floats and "must see" sites.
- Find adventure while challenging themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Personnel

In addition to the division chief, who also serves as chief of cultural and natural resources, interpretation staff at Buffalo National River consists of one district interpreter in each of the three districts, one permanent interpreter and one seasonal position in the Middle District, and one subject-to-furlough position in the Lower District. Positions and grades are:

Headquarters:

Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management– GS-0101-13

Lower District:

District Interpreter – GS-0025-9

Park Guide – GS-0090-05 (Subject to Furlough)

Middle District:

District Interpreter – GS-0025-09

Park Guide – GS-0090-05

Seasonal Park Guide – GS-0090-04/05

Upper District:

District Interpreter – GS-0025-09

The above positions are supplemented by additional seasonal interpreters when funding is available.



A world of wonder is just outside your window.



A dewy hayfield in the Middle District.

Challenges and Issues Affecting Interpretation

Challenges and Issues affecting Interpretation describe internal or external issues, influences, pressures, trends, initiatives, relationships, communications, or goals that may affect interpretation. They are the things that may affect planning or that need to be considered when developing implementation strategies and actions. Identifying and understanding these challenges helps to develop strategies to overcome them, build on strengths, mitigate competing interests, overcome obstacles, and find productive solutions to management issues.

Challenges and opportunities facing the Interpretation and Education programs at Buffalo National River include the following issues:

- Increasing partnership opportunities exist to develop new education programs, both onsite at Toney Bend and through distance learning technologies.
- Park assets include structures that can be (and at times have been) available for use by researchers. The park needs to formalize procedures for access and use and develop the potential to house greater numbers of researchers conducting important scientific studies at the park. Their research, in turn, can inform new interpretive and educational programs for the park.
- The park contains a large number of historic properties and districts. As funding is obtained to preserve and/or restore them, the park has opportunities to better incorporate these structures into the interpretive program.
- One of the most popular sites in the Upper District, Boxley Mill, is under a 50-year lease to the Gorgas Foundation. The park partners with the Foundation to maintain and interpret this structure and its role in the Boxley community.
- Greater competition for visitors' time will continue to affect

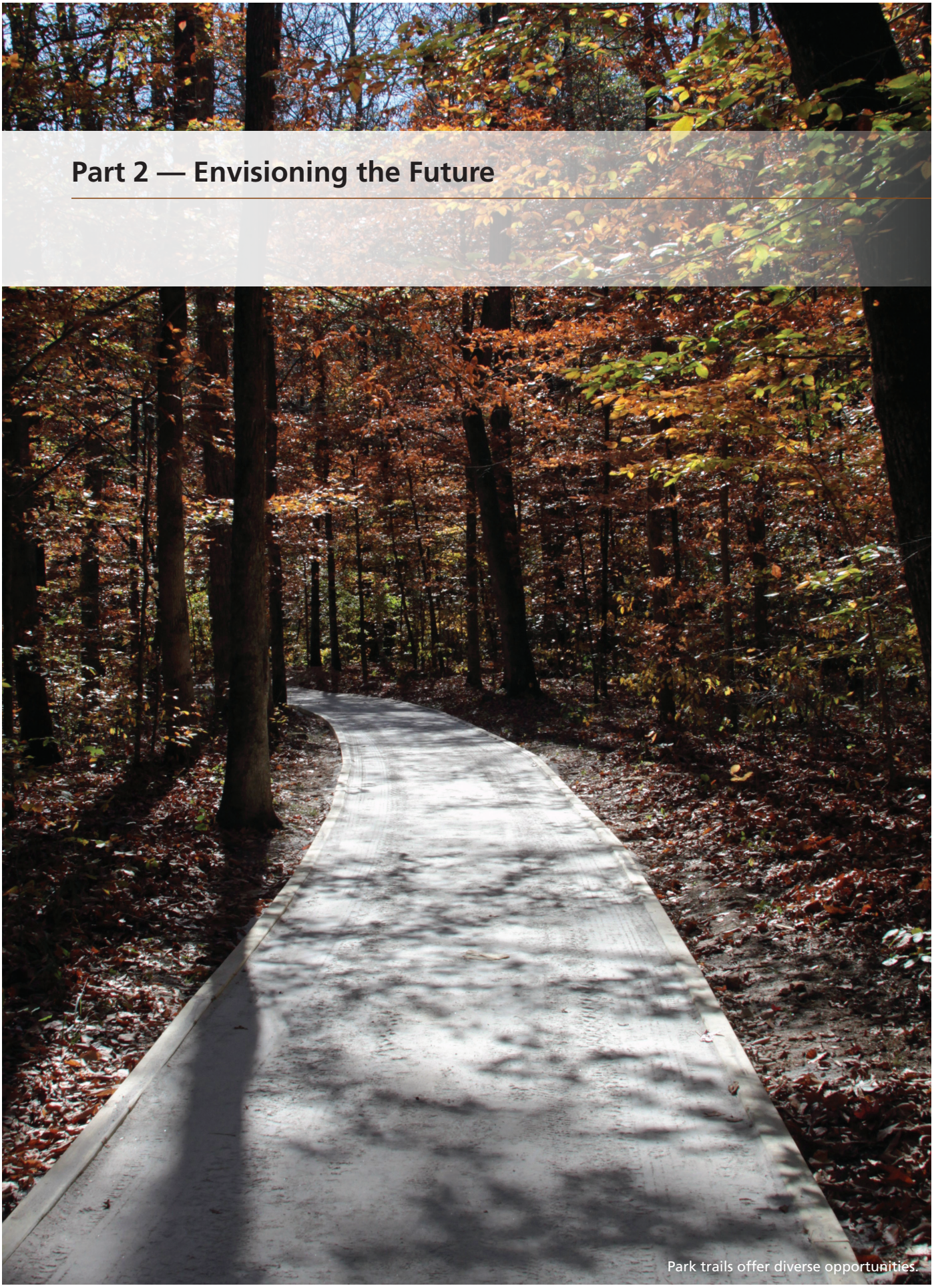
audience decisions about making a physical (or virtual) trip to a park. Staff will need to find ways to work with and through community and other partner organizations to demonstrate to the public that time spent at the park adds value to their lives.

- Audiences have a wide variety of expectations and needs, and they increasingly require different types of media and technology to understand and connect with park resources. Park staff will need to increase external awareness and adapt to societal and technological change and concomitant expectations on the part of the visitor.
- The park extends over the course of 135 river miles and the park boundary is not always readily evident. Numerous access points along the river provide both opportunities for recreation, as well as challenges because of the lack of well-defined points of entry into the park.
- There are three wilderness designations within the park that require visitor education regarding wilderness values/needs as well as limits on acceptable activities within those areas.
- There are numerous opportunities for the park to connect with park neighbors and long-time residents of the area. Many stakeholders express strong emotional and familial connections to the park. Some continue to have strong feelings (both positive and negative) regarding the park's establishment and management.
- The park must consider approaches for operational and fiscal sustainability. This means finding creative ways to support desired services and programming by leveraging non-traditional sources for funding and staffing. Decisions about programs and media must be explicit and data-driven. In addition, the park may place added emphasis on enhancing non-personal services as a cost-effective way to connect with visitors.



An ice storm winterscape.

Part 2 — Envisioning the Future



Park trails offer diverse opportunities.

Envisioning the Future

This section includes management goals, describes desired visitor experiences, identifies targeted audiences, and lists the challenges and issues that affect visitor experience. These all will help guide direction and provide factors to take into consideration when envisioning the future.

Management Goals

In providing visitors with opportunities to form meaningful connections to park resources, interpretation helps to meet management goals. The following are national and park goals that affect direction and decisions about visitor experience and interpretation services and programming.

The park's management goals include:

1. Protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of Buffalo National River.
2. Provide visitors the opportunity for a safe and enjoyable visit.
3. Increase stewardship of the park by visitors, partners, and community members and increase awareness of the National Park Service identity.
4. Provide visitors with opportunities to find relevance and meaning in the park's stories and within the natural zones (i.e., ecosystems), wilderness, and historic sites protected within it.

Interpretation and Education will support these broader management goals by helping visitors understand the value of the park's resources, fostering a sense of stewardship, and strengthening the park identity through proper messaging and interpretive efforts. Management Goals Related to Interpretation and Education include:

- Strengthen resource protection through interpretation and promote local interest in park programs. Seek audience input in the development of programs.
- Use interpretation and education to strengthen safety messages and encourage responsible use of the park's resources.
- Ensure that all interpretive programs adhere to NPS standards for quality, accuracy, relevance, and effectiveness.



The Marshall Islands to Mountains program brought Marshall Islanders to the park for the first time.

- Promote healthy activities and fitness through recreational opportunities.
- Use a variety of interpretive techniques and methods to reach new and underserved audiences.
- Update and improve information and orientation services and park identity elements.
- Help visitors, park neighbors, communities, and elected officials better understand the park mission and management challenges while fostering a sense of stewardship and cooperation with critical park issues.
- Foster a climate of partnership that achieves park goals and relevant community goals. Work closely with community and civic leaders, local and state governments, and elected officials to encourage investment in the park, strengthen the economic benefits to the community, and reinforce the park's value to the region.
- Engage visitors and students in dialogue about critical issues facing the park, nation, and world. Provide students and educators with opportunities for research and citizen science programs.

Citizen-scientists participate in a BioBlitz at the Toney Bend Environmental Education Center.



Desired Visitor Experiences

Desired visitor experiences describe the physical, intellectual, and emotional experiences that should be available for visitors to the park. Quality experiences will be available for audiences of all abilities including those with visual, auditory, mobility, or cognitive limitations.

Development of Visitor Experience Goals

While the Management Goals Related to Interpretation and Education above represent goals which are essential for fulfilling the mission of the park, stakeholders also share important and valid insights and goals for the park's interpretation and education efforts.

The May and August 2014 Long-Range Interpretive Plan workshops included discussions about the type and quality of experiences which visitors expect and want to have at the park. Those discussions were informed by public input gathered during the creation of the 2009 Draft General Management Plan (see Appendix 6).

The following six Visitor Experience Goals express values shared by both park management and park audiences:

Access

Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.



The Toney Bend Environmental Education Center is on the edge of the wilderness, and on the edge of our future education program.

Significance of the River

Audiences gain an increased understanding of the river's significance, and gain insight for how Buffalo National River relates to other places in their lives.

Immersive Experiences

Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.

Partnerships

Stakeholders and park staff work toward clear and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Resource Protection

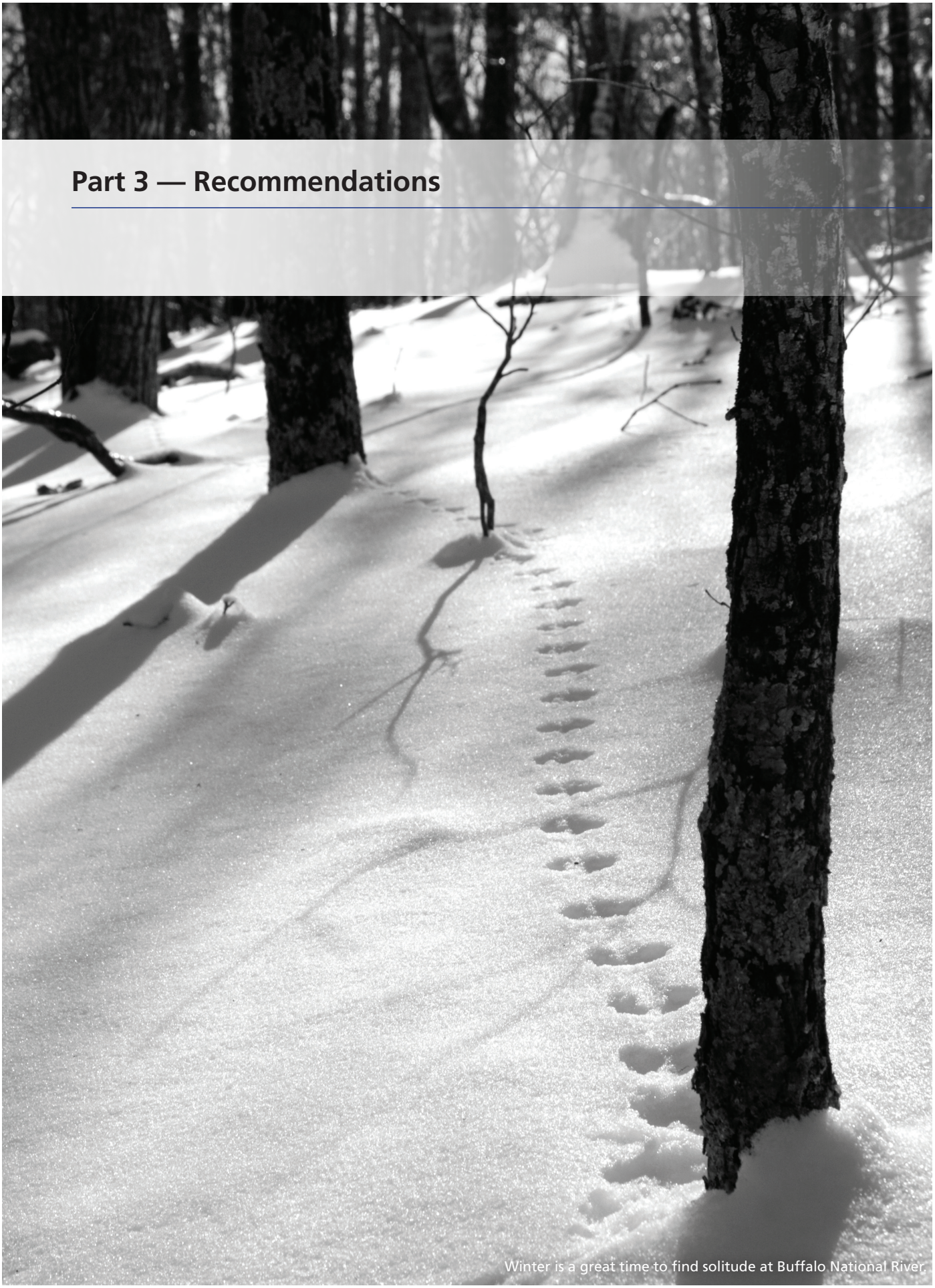
Audiences contribute toward the conservation of park resources and are vigilant in protecting the river's integrity.

Research and Education

The park provides engaging opportunities for the advancement and sharing of natural and cultural learning.

The Recommended Strategies and Actions in Part III reference these six Visitor Experience Goals.

Part 3 — Recommendations



Winter is a great time to find solitude at Buffalo National River.

Recommended Strategies and Actions

In collaboration with stakeholders, the park has developed a set of recommendations for Interpretation and Education which are designed to be realistic, achievable, and sustainable. The recommendations are grounded in visitor experience and management goals, connect to park themes and targeted audiences, and will support the park's mission of visitor enjoyment and resource protection.

Numerous suggestions were developed during the two Long-Range Interpretive Plan workshops in 2014. These suggestions incorporated ideas generated previously during development of the 2009 Draft General Management Plan.

Recommendations have been grouped into four categories:

- Information, Orientation, and Visitor Services
- Interpretation and Education – Personal Services
- Interpretation and Education – Non-personal Services
- Resource Management and Visitor Protection Services

This section conveys these recommendations in narrative format. Overall strategies have been developed for each of these work areas; in some instances, several strategies are identified.

For each category, the following information is provided:

- Strategies
- Targeted audiences
- Relevant Visitor Experience Goals
- Specific actions

The suggested timeline to accomplish specific action items appears in the Action Plan tables beginning on page 44 of this report.

Information, Orientation and Visitor Services

Strategy: Improve orientation materials at visitor center, visitor contact stations, access areas, and trailheads to ensure visitors know they are in a national park and know how to navigate through the park.

Audience: Park Visitors

Visitor Experience Goals:

- Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically



Students participate in the park's first Cave Ecology Camp.



Toes meet toads one-on-one.

and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.

- Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.

Actions:

- Develop exterior exhibits (that are available 24 hours) at the Visitor Center and visitor contact stations.
- Install new bulletin boards throughout park with updated content. Include a permanent display of information that does not change during the year.
- Develop updated trail maps and signs. Design and install updated information kiosks at trailheads. Improve signs at parking areas to lead hikers to trailheads. Trailhead signs should correctly convey the levels of effort required, as well as mileage and topographic information.
- Develop and install exterior exhibits at launch/access points that focus on relevant sections of the river. Exhibits should include "what to see and do" information for visitors.

Strategy: Develop News Media Outreach Plan

Audience: Park visitors, potential visitors, virtual visitors, park staff

Visitor Experience Goal:

- Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.

Actions:

- Develop a press kit that includes updated park contact information, updates on critical resource issues, recreational opportunities, and calendar of events, among other relevant information.
- Conduct quarterly news media blasts.
- Correct information in regional and web-based media (e.g. "state park" listing in some areas).
- Conduct annual familiarization

tours for travel writers and staff of visitor information centers.

- Field staff develop personal relationships with local news media staff.

Interpretation and Education – Personal Services

Strategy: Develop new and expanded personal services that support critical resource management issues in the park.

Audience: Park Visitors, Neighbors

Visitor Experience Goals:

- Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.
- Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.

Actions:

- Expand guided hikes, guided floats, and cave tours to highlight critical resource issues of water quality, White Nose Syndrome in bats, climate change, and other important issues.
- Support "citizen science" projects to highlight resource stewardship with an emphasis on Wilderness and Threatened and Endangered Species.

Strategy: Develop programs to reach new and underserved audiences.

Audience: Park visitors, potential visitors

Visitor Experience Goals:

- Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.
- Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.

Actions:

- Develop park events that are specifically designed for the interests and needs of participants from neighboring/regional



Visitors from the Marshall Islands enjoy the river.

communities, such as an Ozark Folk Life Festival or other family-oriented events.

- Plan and develop Iron Ranger Challenge in cooperation with other Arkansas NPS areas.
- Plan and develop biathlon event for the NPS Centennial with park partners.
- Work with Searcy County Chamber of Commerce to plan and implement Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative grant to conduct Ozark Folklife Festival in the Middle District.
- Engage in community outreach, perhaps as part of the new Visitor Experience/Resource Protection Plan effort, to listen and respond to suggestions from new and underserved audiences about the kind of programs and services that would attract them to the park.
- Engage with community news media and community organizations to encourage new and underserved audiences to engage with the park.
- Connect with new and underserved audiences through social media to determine their interests and to respond to their interests that would attract them to the park.

Strategy: Develop curriculum-based education programs in partnership with external partners that address new trends in learning, e.g., Next Generation Science Standards, and meet the needs of educators and students.

Audience: K-12 teachers and students, College and University partners.

Visitor Experience Goal:

- The park provides engaging opportunities for the advancement and sharing of natural and cultural learning.

Actions:

- Create a distance learning program, initially based at the Visitor Center, with regular programming to reach regional and national audiences and discuss critical resource issues.
- Implement agreement with Arkansas State University to develop Toney Bend Environmental Education Center/ ASU Harp Field Research Station. Work with faculty and students

Visitor programs encourage hands on expression.





The summer cave ecology camp brings us face-to-face with bats.

to develop research questions to engage younger students.

- Redesign Day-By-The-Buffalo program to meet new curriculum standards and to train educators through an immersive, multi-day version of the program.
- Continue to develop and expand summer camp experiences, such as the Stream Ecology Camp and the Cave Ecology Camp, in partnership with others such as Ozark Unlimited Resources (OUR) Educational Service Cooperative and Arkansas Game and Fish educators.
- Work through partners to present Project WET/Project WILD programs focused on park resources and critical issues.
- Develop summaries of current or ongoing research at the park and make the research results accessible to others through the park website, social media, and special presentations and programs.
- Work with Ozark Unlimited Resources, resource management staff, and area educators to create professional development opportunities for teachers and work with them to create project-based learning programs in their classrooms.
- Develop partnership with North Arkansas Community College to establish environmental science programs.
- Develop research station in the upper district, perhaps at Steel Creek, to complement Toney Bend facility and to focus on research activities.

Strategy: Work with partners to expand opportunities for engaging park neighbors, concessioners, and local communities in creating additional programs for visitors.

Audience: Park partners, concessioners, neighboring residents, park staff

Visitor Experience Goal:

- Stakeholders and park staff work toward clear and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Actions:

- Explore how new partnerships could help address visitor experience goals and seek development of additional park partners. Potential partnerships include:
  - Business Interests: Buffalo National River Partners may involve private businesses such as Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, the Walton Family Foundation, and



Buffalo Point

Coleman, to further their work. Local or national businesses can provide equipment for BNRP-sponsored hikes or floats for first-time visitors who may never have camped before. In addition, they can provide support for advertising recreational opportunities. Many local recreational outfitters are highly engaged with their communities of user groups and this can serve as a source of volunteers, as well.

- Traditional Users: partners may include genealogists and local historical societies, among others. Volunteers may be recruited to conduct research in the park collections and provide material for programs that target local audiences. Volunteers also may be recruited to provide upkeep and maintenance in cemeteries and for historic structures, such as churches, in the park.
- Experienced Recreationists: partners may include members of the Arkansas Canoe Club, Audubon, Sierra Club, Ozark Society, and the Nature Conservancy, among others. The park can seek expert assistance in providing programs to teach first-time users how to float, set up a camp, or pursue other recreational activities in a safe manner.
- New Audiences: partners may include organizations with youth service requirements, organizations that support new Americans, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission in Little Rock, that serves a statewide organization of youth of color, and other urban-centered youth organizations to reach first-time users.

- Provide training opportunities for businesses, concessioners, partners, interpreters, law enforcement, maintenance, resource management, and administration to share knowledge about visitors, resources, critical issues, safety, media standards, policy and procedures. This will help to periodically get everyone on the same page and encourage a culture of communication. Communications should then be maintained in order that the park will let partners know about river levels, closures, openings, recent wildflower sightings, and special programs such as cave tours.
- Since floating the river is the

quintessential experience on the Buffalo, and since so many visitors rent their canoes or kayaks, it would be of benefit to work with concessioners to design and install well-designed NPS outdoor signs or wayside kiosks to give all customers the basic park story, park key messages, and orientation.

- Work with partners and concessioners to learn about their priorities for needed infrastructure maintenance or improvements.
- Develop new opportunities for local residents to participate in the park's Volunteer Program.

Strategy: Expand opportunities for young people to engage in park programs, learn about job opportunities, and connect to Buffalo National River.

Audience: Local and regional youth; Potential Pathways and Seasonal Employees

Visitor Experience Goal:

- Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.

Actions:

- Develop group of high school or older students who can serve as mentors to younger students in the Day-By-The-Buffalo program and/or in the Explore for Health program.
- Work with partners to develop scholarship or awards program to recognize students who develop park-based research or learning projects.
- Maintain and expand outreach efforts with youth-serving organizations, such as Boy and Girl Scouts, to provide high-quality service projects for them to complete.
- Seek opportunities for youth hiring or internships in all areas of the park.
- Youth recruitment, hiring, and retention can be a full time job. Cultivating a staff member who perhaps already has a natural rapport with young people (and perhaps even with diverse young people) to become fully acquainted with the requirements and opportunities of Pathways, Public Land Corps, and the Direct Hiring Authority for Research Assistant



Buffalo National River includes more than 40 cemeteries—reminders of those who came before us.

Internship programs can advance the park's career pipeline and internship development goals.

- Develop a youth advisory group to propose potential youth-centered programs and activities.
- Develop opportunities for youth to participate in the park's Volunteer Program.

Interpretation and Education – Non-personal Services

Strategy: Improve development of publications and other non-personal services.

Audience: Onsite and virtual visitors

Visitor Experience Goals:

- Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.
- Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.

Actions:

- Update Currents to address critical resource issues and develop Centennial edition.
- Revise park Unigrid brochure to reflect Steel Creek Visitor Contact station and new regulations.
- Visitor Center and visitor contact stations should incorporate outdoor orientation experience areas at each facility to broaden the opportunities for quality visitor experiences, regardless of staffing. Orientation panels and kiosks can be considered for popular gathering places such as parking lots, group camping areas, and restrooms. Include safety, welcome, and "It's Up To You" messages.
- Many parks now see increasing use of picnic or day-use areas, particularly among 'new Americans' or immigrant families. The pavilions and picnic shelters at Buffalo River could be platforms for sharing the park's resource protection messages or its historic storytelling. Places where visitors now stop for photo taking at the park's entrance signs also are potential hotspots for orientation and outdoor experience decision making.

Children of all ages are fascinated by nature.





Buffalo River provides many opportunities for family activities.

- Outdoor agricultural exhibits may be appropriate in several areas within the park, including the stables and other farm areas at Valley Y Ranch, the field adjacent to the day-use area at Tyler Bend Campground, Collier Homestead, and Boxley. These exhibits could involve demonstrations of historic crops, equipment, and processes. Wayside exhibits are also needed to interpret historic sites, including the pre-historic culture, Ozark culture, Buffalo Point Cabins, old wells, homesteads, and historic zinc mines. The park needs to develop an overall wayside exhibit plan to incorporate other potential topics, such as prescribed fire and current natural resource management issues.
- Relief maps can provide essential understanding of the park's geography on an experiential level that is not limited to the sense of vision. Maps of relevant sections of the river should be placed in each district's visitor contact location, preferably in an exterior location that is not limited by staffing of the facilities. The relief map which is part of the Tyler Bend Visitor Center exhibit needs to be upgraded to include the entire district and to be more accessible.
- Research possibilities of providing interpretation through cell phone applications, if sufficient coverage exists to provide viable methods for delivery.
- Develop unique maps for trailheads that match the view (north, south, east, or west facing) needed at each particular trailhead. Maps on exhibit panels at put-in and take-out points, should also focus on the relevant segment of river, and incorporate tactile elements where possible.
- Develop a new interpretive film that would address the following park interpretive themes:
  - A Beautiful River Preserved
  - People and Place
  - Motivation and Incentive: Why Visitors Come Here

Strategy: Enhance non-personal services by upgrading/revising museum exhibits at the Visitor Center and visitor contact stations.

Audience: Onsite visitors



Sod Collier House

Visitor Experience Goal:

- Audiences gain an increased understanding of the river's significance, and gain insight for how Buffalo National River relates to other places in their lives.

Actions:

- With the increasing fall visitation in the upper district (during the elk rut season) and continued year-round visitation in the middle and lower districts, full-service visitor centers are needed in all three districts. The park should develop funding requests in the interim to upgrade interpretive exhibits and accessibility at the existing facilities and work with Midwest Region staff to develop funding proposals for visitor center development. It is important that facilities are designed with consideration for safety, universal access, and the needs of larger, multi-generational audience groups.

- Develop plan for the design and installation of new museum exhibits at Tyler Bend Visitor Center. Exhibits should include overall messages about the river and critical resource issues, but also key in on features unique to the Middle District, such as incorporating oral histories as part of a touchscreen exhibit so visitors can see and hear long-time residents of the area talk about their experiences. Exhibits should feature interactive elements and possibly short interpretive films. They should provide interpretive experiences for all the target audiences. These exhibits should convey the park interpretive themes of People and Place, A Beautiful River Preserved, and First Impressions: Perceptions of Place, in particular.

- Develop exhibits for visitor contact stations at Steel Creek and Buffalo Point that contain overall messages about the river and critical resource issues, but also reflect features specific to those areas, such as Rush Mining District in Lower District, and Valley Y Ranch history and whitewater floating in the Upper District. Within existing space, the exhibits should have some form of interactive experiences. They should provide interpretive experiences for all target audiences. Steel Creek exhibits should focus primarily on the interpretive themes of Science and Education,

Motivations and Incentives: Why Visitors Come Here, First Impressions: Perceptions of Place, and a Beautiful River Preserved. At Buffalo Point, exhibits can focus on Science and Education, People and Place, and Motivations and Incentives: Why Visitors Come Here.

- Visitor Center museum exhibits should include artifacts and information about inhabitants of the area, including Osage, Cherokee, and white settlers. The ten tribes should be consulted in telling their own histories. One possible idea for an exhibit which would be engaging and experiential is the construction of a bluff shelter exhibit which could address both karst formations and archeology. Exhibits also should reveal other historical cultures of the area. Historic furnishings exhibits can help audiences share learning across generations.

Strategy: Incorporate social media and revised website technology to enhance non-personal services.

Audience: Onsite and virtual visitors

Visitor Experience Goal:

- Audiences gain an increased understanding of the river's significance, and gain insight for how Buffalo National River relates to other places in their lives.

Actions:

- Develop Social Media Plan to take advantage of new technologies in reaching visitors. The plan should include an estimate of the amount of staff time required for content development for social media and the park website.
- Develop a schedule to populate the website and other social media with seasonal information such as wildflower and elk viewing, and more durable information such as oral histories.
- Develop digital media to provide virtual access to the historic Rush Mining district and the prehistoric Rush campsite. Digital, cross-platform 3-D media will allow audiences to "see what can't be seen."
- Videos showing "what to see and do" at the park can be used as podcasts on electronic platforms, and combined into longer videos to be shown on site. These videos can help provide universal access to signature park experiences.



Busy morning at the launch site.

Resource Management and Visitor Protection Services

Strategy: Work with park partners and neighboring communities to highlight critical resource issues and provide opportunities for engagement and stewardship.

Audience: Community partners and neighboring residents, park staff

Visitor Experience Goals:

- Audiences contribute toward the conservation of park resources and are vigilant in protecting the river's integrity.
- Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. Programs and media are presented in ways that convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.

Actions:

- Develop Visitor Experience/ Resource Protection Plan. Public comments generated during the 2009 draft General Management Plan process, as well as 2014 Long-Range Interpretive Plan workshops, express the importance of clear messaging from the park regarding appropriate types and levels of recreation. It is important for the park to complete carrying capacity studies, so that many issues surrounding visitor experience can be settled. In addition to resource protection, the park will then be able to convey fairness in allocation of recreational opportunities, and address issues such as launching congestion and concerns about appropriate levels of parking, restrooms, and camping infrastructure.
- Continue to plan and sponsor river clean-up events. Partner with BNRP and other agencies to sponsor Leave No Trace training.
- Expand opportunities for audiences to contribute to cultural resource inventories and cultural resource protection activities, to include documentation of home sites and cemetery information.
- Support outreach to neighboring farmers, ranchers, loggers, and other users of the watershed and work with concessioners and



Learning about the park while waiting for the early morning fog to lift.

others to highlight critical resource and visitor protection goals. Topics for data collection and sharing could include:

- the impact of the introduction of non-native species on the landscape;
- the impact of extreme weather events on the river, with a tie to climate change;
- karst and hydrology; and
- night sky and bats.

Staffing Needs

In order to more successfully accomplish the goals outlined in this plan, the park recommends an increase in staffing to include:

- Continued temporary, seasonal, and student staff to accommodate peak visitation.
- Creation of a permanent, Subject to Furlough position in the Upper District.
- Creation of a dedicated Education Specialist position.
- Develop recurring internship opportunities with nearby academic institutions for both short term and semester-long projects.
- Community Outreach/PIO Park Ranger
- Writer/editor

Research and Planning Needs

- Development Plan for Valley Y Ranch and Lost Valley
- Cultural Landscape Plans/Historic Structures Reports for Rush, Boxley Valley (including mill and fishing cabins) and other historic properties
- VERP Plan/ Carrying capacity study



Parker-Hickman House

- Accessibility Strategy to develop accessible trails and campsites and interpretive media, such as virtual hikes and floats and accessible interior and exterior exhibits. Strategy should include communications plan for notifying visitors about accessible facilities/ programs.
- Wayside exhibit proposal
- Social Media Plan
- Volunteer Plan
- Education Plan

Action Plan 2016-2018 and Future Years

Action items have been developed which outline the specific tasks required to accomplish each goal. These actions will be revisited periodically (at least annually) and prioritized based on changing circumstances, opportunities, operational need, funding, budget availability, and other factors. Actions that are not completed in the year identified will be reevaluated as a future action.

BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER — ACTION PLAN

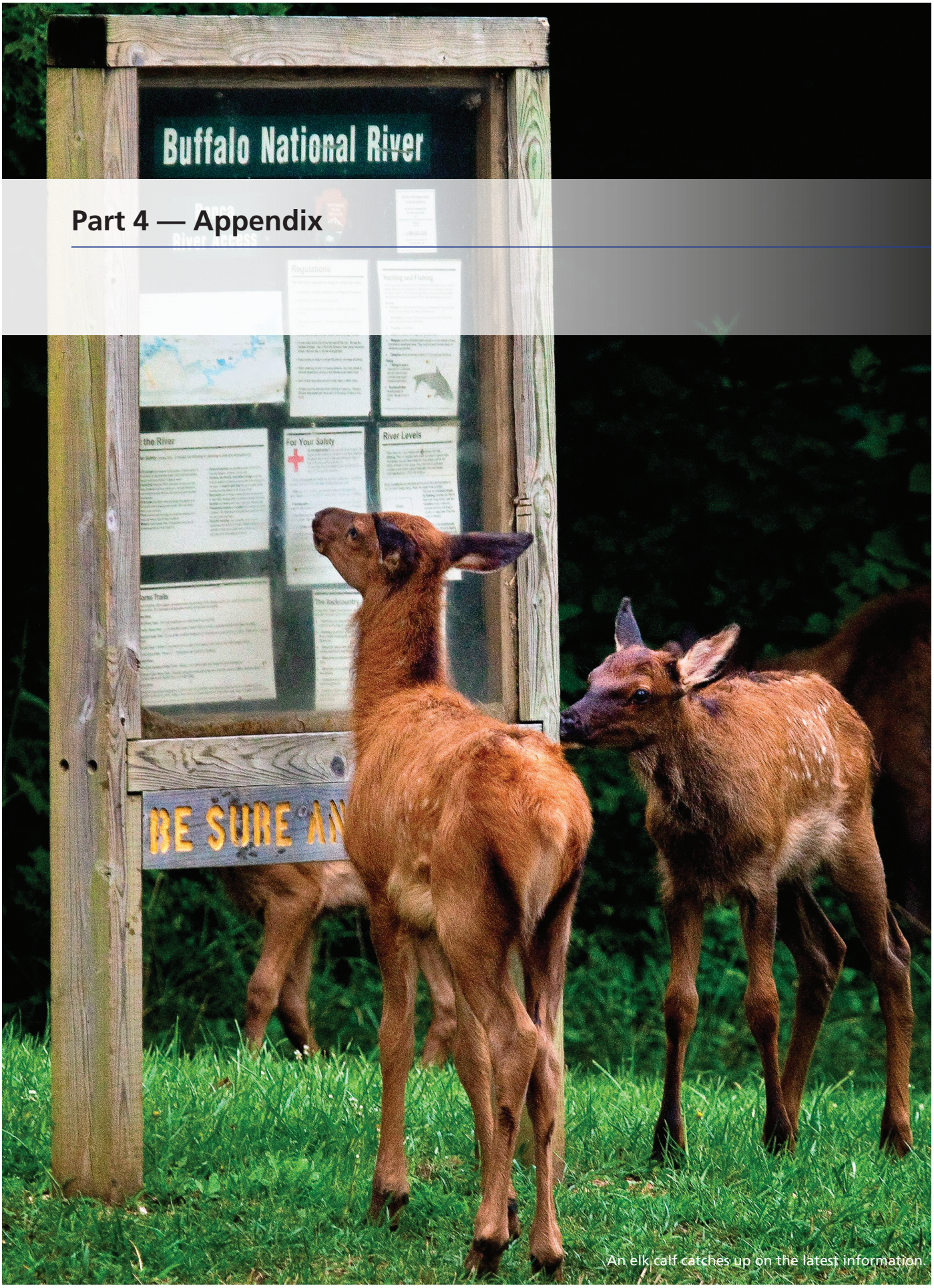
Personal Services	Target Date		
	Short-Term 2016-2018	Mid-Term 2019-2022	Long-Term 2023-2026
Audience: General			
Install accessible information desk area for staff and visitors at Visitor Center and Visitor Contact Stations.		X	
Expand guided hikes, floats, and cave tours to highlight critical resource issues of water quality, climate change, and other important issues.			
As staffing allows, re-establish interpretation/orientation presence at the lower contact station at Buffalo Point.		X	
Audience: Park Neighbors			
Develop Ozark Folklife Festival Centennial Event	X		
Work with Facility Management to develop new projects for YCC employees and prepare articles and press releases for local media to highlight their work.	X		
Develop a program or special event on past and present farming practices.	X		
Develop annual volunteer appreciation event.	X		
Continue to serve as guest speaker at community or organization events-interpretation and resources staff.	X		
Recruit local students to serve as mentors to younger students in the Explore for Health programs.		X	
Work with BNRP to continue recruiting volunteers for elk viewing season and develop programs in partnership with the Elk Education Center.	X	X	
Develop training opportunities for local business/concessions, partners, and volunteers to share knowledge about critical resource issues and recreational opportunities.		X	
Expand outreach efforts to youth-serving organizations to provide high-quality service projects for them to complete.		X	
Audience: New/Underserved			
Plan and develop Iron Ranger Challenge with other Arkansas parks.	X		
Plan and develop Buffalo River Biathlon event for the Centennial in the Lower District.	X		
Work with Eastern National to provide sales items geared toward first-time visitors: hiking guides, species identification guides, and camping skills, among others.	X		
Partner with BNRP, Concessions, and other agencies to provide guided hikes, floats, fishing outings, and other recreational opportunities for first-time users. Seek grant funding for equipment.	X	X	
Work with partners and neighboring parks to provide immersive experiences for underserved audiences, particularly students from urban areas.	X	X	
Work with Fees and Facility Maintenance to ensure that each district in the park has a reservable group camping site and that picnic areas/day use areas are available in each district.		X	
Develop "shovel ready" volunteer projects for large groups.	X		
Audience: Curriculum-Based Educational Audiences			
Develop distance learning programs and work with educational partners to provide programs for area schools.	X	X	
Review Day by the Buffalo program to ensure that the curriculum aligns with current state standards.	X		
Train staff to conduct Project WET/Project WILD programs focused on critical park issues.	X		
Develop visual arts and language arts programs, inspired by the beauty of wilderness and nature.	X		
Continue developing summer camp programs: Stream Ecology Camp and Caving Camp	X	X	
Develop curriculum-based, hands-on field trip experiences for students in addition to Day by the Buffalo – experiences can center on caves/karst, water quality, archeology, history, or other specific resource topics.	X	X	
Work with educational partners to develop and offer professional development opportunities for area educators.	X	X	
Develop database of current and ongoing research conducted on the park and make it accessible to other researchers, through the website or social media.		X	
Develop research centers at Toney Bend and Steel Creek, in partnership with ASU and other educational partners.		X	X
Work with North Arkansas Community College to develop environmental education curriculum.		X	X
Create a dedicated Education Specialist position.		X	

Non-Personal Services	Target Date		
	Short-Term 2016-2018	Mid-Term 2019-2022	Long-Term 2023-2026
Audience: General			
Revise park Unigrid to reflect changes at Steel Creek and new regulations.	X		
Develop Centennial edition of Currents and include updated information and critical resource issues.	X		
Develop updated content for park bulletin boards that reflect current NPS graphic design standards.	X		
Work with facility management to install new wayside exhibits and new bulletin boards.	X		
Research possibilities for providing interpretation via cell phone or mobile platforms, as coverage is available. Potential to interpret Boxley Valley and Rush cultural areas, and also provide updated information on recreational opportunities.			
Develop Wayside Exhibit plan to identify potential future locations/themes for exhibits: agricultural history, cultural landscapes, geology, water quality, climate change, and other relevant topics.		X	
Secure funding to design and build updated exhibits for all park contact stations that address critical resource management issues and relevant interpretive themes.		X	X
Upgrade A/V equipment at Tyler Bend Visitor Center.		X	
Develop new park interpretive film.			X
Audience: Park Neighbors			
Develop electronic platform to showcase selected oral histories from the collection, linked to GIS locations in the park.		X	
Develop off-season tours or programs that target local audiences, including information from oral histories and local history.	X	X	
Promote park-hosted reunions that may generate additional oral histories.		X	
Develop a series of short histories on electronic media formats to highlight community history.			X
Create landscaping at Collier Homestead that reflects historical uses.		X	
Audience: New/Underserved			
Develop social media plan and populate the website and other social media with seasonal information such as wildflower and elk viewing, and more durable information such as oral histories.	X		
Revise park website to provide more information on recreational opportunities in the park, making sure to include options with varying degrees of skill/experience needed.	X		
Reach new users through local or statewide recreation organizations, community leaders, community centers, and churches, among others, to publicize events and recreational opportunities.			
Improve NPS identity to exterior of visitor contact stations at Steel Creek and Buffalo Point and improve pull-out parking area in front of iconic buffalo sign at Buffalo Point (a traditional spot for visitors to pull off the road and take souvenir photographs) to be accessible and safe.		X	
Audience: Curriculum-Based Educational Audiences			
Work with local schools (EAST labs) to develop and produce short videos/podcasts to highlight resource management issues.	X	X	

Information, Orientation, and Visitor Services	Target Date		
	Short-Term 2016-2018	Mid-Term 2019-2022	Long-Term 2023-2026
Audience: General			
Develop updated trail maps.	X		
Work with resources and facility management staff to evaluate signs at trailheads, eliminate redundant ones and ensure that signs reflect current standards for orientation and accessibility.		X	
Ensure that GPS coordinates are available (on the website or through other media) for trailheads and access points.	X		
Develop and install exterior exhibits at launch points as appropriate, that focus on relevant sections of the river.		X	X
Develop relief maps in each visitor facility for universal access to landscape concepts.			X
Develop exterior exhibits (that are available 24 hours/day) at the visitor center and visitor contact stations.			X
Audience: Park Neighbors			
Develop a media kit, including downloadable, high resolution photos, updated park contact information, updates on critical resource issues, recreational opportunities, and calendar of events.	X		
Post updates (including photos, gauge readings, etc.) regularly not only to website but also to social media outlets.	X	X	X
Develop articles for partner organization newsletters/social media. Provide links for partner websites on park website.	X		
Conduct annual "familiarization" tours in partnership with Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism for travel writers and staff of visitor information centers.		X	
Work with concessioners to develop relevant outdoor exhibits at their locations that provide appropriate orientation and visitor safety information and are available 24 hours/day.		X	X
Audience: New/Underserved			
Create outdoor exhibits at areas with large group use, such as group sites and day use/picnic areas with orientation maps and river safety information.		X	
Audience: Curriculum-Based Educational Audiences			
Acquire a portable 3-D exhibit for use at offsite events.	X		

Resource Management and Visitor Protection Services	Target Date		
	Short-Term 2016-2018	Mid-Term 2019-2022	Long-Term 2023-2026
Audience: General			
Develop Visitor Experience/Resource Protection Plan	X		
Develop Leave-No-Trace media in conjunction with recycling opportunities for monofilament, aluminum, and plastic.	X	X	
Support "Citizen Science" projects to highlight resource stewardship with an emphasis on Wilderness and T&E species.	X		
Correct park identity and information conveyed by radio stations, websites, and publications. (e.g. Lost Valley still listed as a state park)		X	
Audience: Park Neighbors			
Continue to plan and sponsor river clean-up events. Partner with BNRP and other agencies to sponsor Leave No Trace training.	X		
Support outreach to neighboring farmers, ranchers, concessioners, and others to highlight critical resource and visitor protection goals.		X	
Expand opportunities for audiences to contribute to cultural resource inventories and cultural resource protection activities, to include documentation of home sites and cemetery information.		X	
Audience: New/Underserved			
Work with local business and concessions to provide safety equipment (such as child-sized PFDs for loan).	X		
Develop video presentation for river safety; present at concession locations.		X	
Develop career pipeline opportunities for high school and college students through partner-funded or park-funded internships.			X
Audience: Curriculum-Based Educational Audiences			
Create podcasts from the creel census to illustrate river safety, use, and resource issues.		X	

Part 4 — Appendix



An elk calf catches up on the latest information.

Appendix 1 — Volunteers (2014)

The District Interpreter for the Lower District serves as the park's Volunteer Program Manager. Teams of volunteers, including groups such as the Backcountry Horsemen of America, Ozark Society, Arkansas Canoe Club, and Buffalo National River Partners participate in trail maintenance, river cleanups, Search and Rescue operations, and fundraising for the park.

Each campground loop in Tyler Bend, Ozark, and Buffalo Point features a campsite for Campground Hosts. These sites have electricity and water. In addition, the apartment designated for the Artist in Residence program at Steel Creek has been utilized by Campground Hosts. A host is usually stationed at the Steel Creek campground.

As Campground Hosts, volunteers provide important information related to orientation, safety, and regulations. Campers are greeted with professionalism and courtesy and receive an orientation to the campground and significant park recreational opportunities and resources. Campground resources are better protected as a result of the campground host's presence.

Volunteer hours by category:
Administration: 426.00
Campground Host: 2,767.00
Cultural Resource Management: 26.00
General Management: 0.00
Interpretation: 96.00
Maintenance: 1,195.00
Natural Resource Management: 473.00
Protection/Operations/Law Enforcement: 1,938.00
Training: 87.00
Program costs by
Supplies: $ 3,525.27
Uniforms: $ 222.25
Number of VIPs housed in Permanent Structures: 2
Number of VIPs housed in Trailers: 5
Trailer Pads for Volunteers: 5

Appendix 2 - Existing Conditions

The following is a brief and general description of visitor experiences and interpretive services that existed in FY2014.

Interpretive Venues in the Upper District

Boxley Valley

This confined landscape provides the setting to experience the farming landscapes of the Ozark region. However, some demographic change has occurred as the out-migration of the younger generation has been juxtaposed against more recent incomers with no historical ties with the resident population, and who may have a very different vision of themselves and the area than was anticipated in the 1985 Boxley Valley Land Use Plan/ Cultural Landscape Report.

Elk Viewing

Elk viewing is a unique park experience. In October and November, the park draws from all districts to staff Boxley Valley. In the past, the park has had no staff on site during the elk rut. Volunteers first began helping at four locations up and down Boxley Valley during the fall season of 2010. Because that effort was so successful two more locations within the valley have been added to enhance the coverage. Volunteers support the efforts of the interpretive staff by answering questions and giving directions to several thousand visitors during the Boxley Valley Viewing Event which includes tours of the Historic Boxley Grist Mill.

Arkansas Game and Fish re-introduced elk into Boxley Valley in 1981. A total of 112 elk were established; the current population is estimated at 600. Newton County (in which the Upper District of the river flows) is known as the Elk Capitol of Arkansas. The annual Elk Festival located on the courthouse square in Jasper draws thousands of visitors each year. During the two-day festival park interpreters make over

1,000 contacts as visitors stop off at the booth sponsored by the Buffalo National River and Buffalo National River Partners. Elk are an economic boon not only to the county in which they roam but to the entire state.

The popularity of elk is seen as a cause for the shift of visitation away from Highway 7 and more toward Boxley Valley, Lost Valley, and the Steel Creek area. Consequently the park now provides more interpretive programs in those areas.

During 4-6 weeks of rutting season in the fall, tourist traffic can cause inconvenience to local residents. Narrow shoulders have recently been added to Hwy 43 but are insufficient for vehicles to safely pull off and be able to open their car doors.

Boxley Mill

The structures and landscapes in Boxley Valley were acquired by the National Park Service, and sold back to residents with deed restrictions for historic preservation. Identification signs on these areas are brown and white "Notice" signs that explain that the resources are privately held.

The mill was built in the decade after the Civil War. The stone fishing cabins reflect early Arkansas tourism. The catfish fishery dates to post WWII.

Under a fifty-year historic lease with the Gorgas Foundation of Brownsville, Texas, restoration work to preserve and restore the mill is underway. In addition to strengthening essential elements of the structure, an elevated walkway was constructed inside in order to preserve the floor. Until quite recently, tours of the Mill were provided only by the Gorgas Foundation. A renewal of the relationship with Gorgas has now permitted park-led tours of the Mill. Although available year-round by request, the vast majority of mill tours take place during the October-November fall color and elk rut period which sees thousands of visitors to the Boxley Valley.

Local audiences, having known of the mill's existence for years, are thrilled to be permitted inside, and to see how the historic resource is being protected. Mill tours have increased appreciation for resource protection.

Lost Valley is a former state park. The area includes a church and Beechwoods Cemetery. Many regional visitors from Fayetteville and Springdale enjoy this day use area. The trail is the most heavily used trail of all three districts, for the following reasons:

- Proximity to the fastest growing area of Arkansas
- It is the closest Buffalo National River trail to the college town of Fayetteville
- The trail is highly promoted by local businesses. It is near a traditional swimming hole on the Buffalo National River
- Proximity to Harrison, Arkansas
- The trail is in the area where visitors can see elk
- The area is known for its seasonal beauty of flora and fauna
- There is a free-use pavilion located near the trailhead
- A short, level road leads to the trailhead
- Features including waterfalls, a natural bridge, a bluffshelter, and cave are available with moderate effort

The trail is labeled as accessible-friendly but needs more work. The trail could be more accessible with proper surfacing and signage locations and with a bridge leading from the parking area across the creek to the trail's beginning. The trail is broad and good for group hiking.

The pavilion at Lost Valley is free and is available on a first-come, first-served basis. The pavilion is

also utilized by interpretive staff for conducted activities. A series of new wayside exhibits developed for the park at Lost Valley are being installed in the fall of 2015.

Ponca Wilderness

This wilderness is heavily used. Park management is hesitant to limit access to wilderness areas, but the issue of high use creates a different management concern than the other park wilderness areas.

Ponca Elk Education Center

The Ponca Elk Education Center, run by Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, provides information and interpretation about the elk and other wildlife. The park has partnered with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to use the facility to present winter programs.

Erbie

This traditional area includes an active church. Local congregations still conduct baptisms in this area, as well as other areas of the river.

Steel Creek Campground

Steel Creek Campground is a grassy field, surrounded by the high bluffs of Ponca Wilderness. Areas for camping, boat launching, and horse camping are clearly delineated . However, the site offers no day-use picnic area.

The site includes what is left of Valley Y Ranch, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The most high-profile structure is called the Rockhouse, which sits against a hillside, slightly above the stables. The Rockhouse is used to house seasonal law enforcement staff, and occasionally by researchers.

In addition, the Upper District areas include the following campgrounds:

- Carver campground
- Erbie campground
- Erbie horse camp
- Kyles Landing campground
- Ozark campground

Interpretive Venues in the Middle District

Tyler Bend Visitor Center

This facility is far enough off US 65 (the main road through the park) that drivers cannot see the visitor center from the highway. The distance from the highway to the visitor center discourages many drivers and causes them to turn back without getting to the visitor center. The facility is far enough from the campground and river that campers may be discouraged from walking up to it. The site has no view to the river.

A large entrance circle leads drivers to the visitor center. The circle is an important design element of the landscape but does not serve any specific visitor experience function. The exterior of the visitor center needs maintenance work that includes removing dead or dying trees and redesigning the deck to accommodate the tree removal.

Visitors to the Tyler Bend Visitor Center often compliment the facility. The architecture, floor plan, exhibits, and the service provided by park staff seem to convey a "National Park" atmosphere. Visitors may feel welcomed by the traditional media options, Eastern National sales outlet, and approachable information desk. Visitors tend to stay longer if it is hot or rainy outside. A dry erase board allows visitors to track recent wildlife sightings. The site has a library of field guides to help staff work with visitors on species identification.

The overall exhibit area at the Tyler Bend Visitor Center is cohesive and tidy, though somewhat dated. Although they are the park's newest exhibits, they are now about 20 years old and do not reflect current issues at the park, including water quality in light

of agricultural impacts, threatened or endangered species, and other areas of concern for the park and its resources.

The exhibit which features photographs and artifacts from original families is very popular with local residents and their out-of-town visitors.

Staff members who work at this facility spend most of their time providing visitor use information in person and answering frequent phone calls. Although the park website and publications provide all necessary information for park users, the one-on-one communication of information is effective and reassuring. Many people request information about concessioners.

Several films can be viewed in the screening room, including excerpts from "The Buffalo Flows," "Buffalo River: A National Treasure," and "Peace Like a River." Many people do not watch a whole film, especially children.

Tyler Bend Campground

Although the Tyler Bend campground sites haves no hookups for electricity or water, restrooms with showers increase the campground's value as a destination. The campground has an amphitheater with concrete benches that heat up considerably during the day in the summer months.

The river access is being re-built and, in the future, will require a short portage from the parking lot. Due to the collapse of the present road, the gravel bar is currently gated. Prior to this infrastructure damage, the gravel bar served as a primary location for district interpreters to meet with park users and to present formal and informal interpretive programs.

Additional campgrounds located in the Middle District include Mt. Hersey (primitive camping), Woolum (horse camping is permitted), and South Maumee. Also, Grinders Ferry, Shine Eye, and Gilbert gravel bars are open for camping.

Hiking Trails

The network of day hike trails in the Tyler Bend area allows short hikes for up to 5-6 miles. The most heavily used trail goes to the Collier Homestead and a river overlook. The others meander through the woods.

Collier Homestead

Collier Homestead is reached via a short hike along the top of a ridge. The trail has a low level of incline and ends at a beautiful overlook. Cultural landscape management is critical in communicating cultural land-use stories; the Collier Homestead landscape is currently being cleared to portray a hard-scrabble farm.

The approach to the Collier Homestead trailhead has enough room for buses and motor homes to pull off of the road. There are no picnic tables or restrooms at the trailhead.

Interpretive Venues in the Lower District

Visitor Contact Station

The former State Park structure has a foyer which is open 24-hours a day and is stocked with brochures. It serves primarily as a ranger station with an added function of visitor contact. Exhibits at Buffalo Point contact station are nearing 30 years old and are supplemented by smaller exhibits developed by the park. The inside area has artwork, exhibits, films, a touch table, and an Eastern National sales outlet. There is a work area for district interpreters in the back of the building. Regular staffing presence is needed for fee collection in addition to other informational and interpretive services.

Overlook

A spectacular overlook of the river is located at Buffalo Point, adjacent to the restaurant; however, a dated wayside

exhibit about air pollution mars the emotional impact of the view.

Campground

The Buffalo Point campground's beautiful rock-walled layout prohibits full-size motor homes. The sites are spacious, tidy, and distinctive. The campground is formally managed by park staff. A card-reservation system is used, which is a tool used by the rangers, but with which loyal campground users are also familiar. A number of walk-in sites compliment the developed sites. On summer weekends, the campground becomes a "little city," with campers bringing bicycles, tow-behind grills, and other amenities. Access to electricity may bring TV programs into competition with interpretive programs.

Most sites can be reserved in advance, but a number of sites are first-come first-served. Users often have specific sites or even entire loops which they traditionally reserve. These user groups know how to reserve their sites six months in advance, to ensure continuation of their traditional use. User groups include not just families, but also church groups and other organized groups.

Spring Creek and Rush campgrounds are also located in the Lower District. These sites are where local residents have traditionally chosen to gather to avoid the more crowded Buffalo Point location.

Lower Contact Station

This smaller building is another former State Park structure. Due to lack of staffing and some structural issues, the Lower Contact Station is under-utilized.

Amphitheater

Backless benches seat about 240 people. Program attendees often bring their own more comfortable camping chairs. The amphitheater is located adjacent to the campground and is framed by vegetation and dramatic rock outcroppings. The amphitheater currently does not have an accessible entrance trail for visitors with mobility impairments.

Rush Historic Mining District

The ghost town features a loop trail with waysides.

Rush Landing

Boaters must portage a short distance to the river from the day-use area

Interpretation and Education Programs

Several interpreter-led programs are conducted at all of the three districts. These programs include:

- At the Water's Edge provides students with an opportunity to learn how to identify and inventory river organisms through actual hands-on activities.
- Is That Music I Hear? This program uses native, traditional, and modern music to connect the musical heritage of Arkansas to students.
- Historical Influences on the Buffalo River includes four lesson plans: Early Settlers, Mining in Arkansas, The Path to Arkansas Statehood, and The Civil War in Arkansas.

Interpretation and Education Programs in the Upper District

Resources of the park's Upper District lend themselves to specific opportunities for park staff and visitors to share learning experiences. Examples of interpretive programs conducted in the Upper District include:

- Fun in the Field at Ozark Campground provides a fun way to learn about safety in the outdoors.
- Lost Valley Hike is a program which incorporates experiment, research projects, and games in the classroom and in the field. Students

learn about the importance of natural surroundings and the role of human beings in the protection of the outdoors.

- A tour to Boxley Mill shows a site that continued grinding grain long after mills in other areas of the country had ceased their operations, thereby increasing appreciation for the local heritage by the students.

Interpretation and Education Programs in the Middle District

Resources of the Middle District lend themselves to excellent opportunities to interpret the cultural landscape and history of farming in the area. Ranger-led programs include:

- Collier Homestead Tour focuses on how change came slowly to the Ozark Mountains, and settlers depended upon their own resourcefulness long after "modern conveniences" were common in other regions of the United States.
- River View Stroll introduces students to various forest communities at Buffalo National River.
- Guided Cave Tours – Back O' Beyond and Silver Hill Caves provide opportunities for visitors to experience a wild cave, see the underground beauty of the Ozarks, learn how caves form, and understand their unique ecosystems.

The gravel bar is an excellent location for formal and informal ranger-led programs, although this site is temporarily closed due to deterioration of the built environment.

Interpretation and Education Programs in the Lower District

Resources of the Lower District lend themselves to opportunities for park staff and visitors to share learning experiences. The following serve as examples of interpretive programs offered:

- Ozark Music provides an opportunity to listen to local talent perform the music that has echoed through these hills for generations.
- Colorful Waters includes a walk to one of the park's finest overlook views where visitors create a watercolor of Buffalo National River.
- Overlook Hike discusses how the Ozarks of northern Arkansas harbor a great variety of plant and animal life due to factors such as location, elevation and climate.
- Rush Ghost Town is a program which explores the fact that the Rush Creek Mining District is recognized as the most important zinc-producing area in the State of Arkansas. Learners discover the development of this whole new industry and its associated impact on the economy.
- Indian Rockhouse Hike explores how the vast diversity of natural resources of the Buffalo River valley has attracted people for thousands of years.

Services

Several concessioners are permitted by the National Park Service to rent canoes and rafts and to provide shuttle services within Buffalo National River. Concessioners provide canoes, paddles, life jackets, mesh litter bags, and shuttles. Many of the River's canoe rental concessioners sell snacks, prepared food items, and/or various groceries

Buffalo Point Concession operates the only restaurant within the park boundary. It is located at Buffalo Point in the Lower District and is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Youth Programs

The Buffalo National River Scouting Award is a patch given to all Scouting and Venture group members that complete a 50-mile float/ hike and

an approved 10-hour Service Project within 10 consecutive days.

Junior Ranger programs are purposely alternated year-to-year as children return in sequential years and want new programs.

The park's aquatic biologist coordinates a summer stream ecology camp. Partners have included North Arkansas Community College and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. This is a 5-day camp for high school students. Activities are documented and rewarded through a team-created DVD.

School groups use the park for end-of-year field trips which may not be curriculum-based. Unguided groups of students have a different experience in the park than students participating in formally-conducted programs.

Interpretive Partners

A strong supportive community of not-for-profit groups and generous individuals such as the American Hiking Association, Sierra Club, the Ozark Society, scouting troops, and long-time volunteers has allowed the park to accomplish important tasks, such as linking the trails of the Upper, Middle, and Lower districts to create a park-long Buffalo River Trail.

- **Eastern National** assists in interpretation by providing park-related sales items for visitors to purchase at park visitor centers and by publishing books and designing a variety of items for visitors to purchase. The park provides sales space and park interpretive staff handle the sales. The association makes an annual donation to Buffalo National River. These donated funds are used to publish interpretive materials and to support interpretive programs. To increase sales, the association is always looking to expand the variety of products it offers. Limited sales space in the visitor center and Buffalo Point contact station reduces the possibility of any great expansion at this time.
- The **Buffalo National River Partners** formed because of common interests in the Buffalo River. The goals of the Partners are to provide volunteer and financial resources to Buffalo National River which will assist with a variety of projects to enhance facilities, improve visitor experiences, and preserve the unique natural and cultural features of the Buffalo National River. The Partners operate in concert with the National Park Service via a Memorandum of Agreement.
- **Arkansas Game and Fish Commission** is a state agency with some overlap of mission with the National Park Service. Park users may not "see" the difference between the Commission and National Park Service. The National Park Service may make management decisions that the staff of the Commission must then explain to users. The National Park Service needs to efficiently communicate information to the Commission so that their staff is able to disseminate it.
- The **David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History** at the University of Arkansas conserves oral histories related to the park.
- The **Arkansas Master Naturalists** is a group which seeks to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and services dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.
- The **Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen** is a local chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of America. The Horsemen is a group of riders who enjoy riding the trails on public lands, and

work to improve them and allow better access for everyone. This is done through extensive trail maintenance and improvement projects coordinated with local government and private agencies. Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen have a general agreement with the park to help map and maintain trails and participate in training and search and rescue activities.

- The **Buffalo River Merchants' Association** is a Chamber of Commerce-type organization associated with the park's Upper District.
- The **Upper Buffalo River Association** provides a network of businesses and a calendar of events that is useful to park audiences.
- The membership of **Greater Searcy County Chamber of Commerce** includes many concessioners who serve park visitors.
- The **Harrison Regional Chamber of Commerce** promotes area businesses and quality of life. Harrison is nationally recognized as one of the "Best Small Towns in America" and contributes to the visitor experience of park audiences.

Appendix 3 - Current Audiences

Audience segments include:

General Audiences. This is the "typical" audience of mixed characteristics that visits the park. It includes recreational visitors: canoeists and kayakers, hikers, photographers, campers, and equestrians.

Experienced Recreational Users

These visitors may be new to Buffalo National River, but are experienced in their recreational pursuits. Experienced Recreational Users may view resource management issues similarly to the NPS view. Many Traditional Users are also members of this audience.

The range of recreational pursuits spans from a more "passive" observance of species (such as birds and wildflowers) to the challenge of whitewater paddling. Recreational users experience the park on land and water in a variety of ways, and this audience is consciously dependent on management policies which permit or discourage various uses.

Workshop participants repeatedly indicated that users need to have clear boundaries for various recreational activities, and to trust the science behind park-set limits on visitor use. This audience feels strongly that recreational activities need to be fairly distributed across the various user groups, and not arbitrarily curtailed.

Floaters

By far, the largest numbers of visitors to the park are the numerous small groups and families who come to float the river in season. The float season begins in the upper Buffalo in the spring. More water makes this section attractive for visitors seeking a higher level of challenge with whitewater kayaking. The season moves downstream, varying from month to month with rainfall. Unlike rivers that are fed by perennial springs, the Buffalo is rainfall dependent. In dry years, the floating season is short and quickly moves down into the Middle and Lower Districts. In wet years use of the Upper Buffalo is prolonged with floating opportunities spread out through the park for the entire season.

Motorcyclists

Motorcycle safety issues include canoe trailers which travel "over the middle line" when traveling through bends in the road, and weather-related washouts. Invitations to motorcycle groups must include relevant safety issues. Eureka Springs, a historic

town located one hour from park headquarters, is a hub of motorcycle activity.

Horseback Riders

There is a long, rich culture of equestrian use along the Buffalo River as horses and mules supported the commerce of the region. Farming and logging with stock was once a common practice in the rural counties along the river. Mail delivery and traveling "circuit rider" judges and preachers depended daily on their horses and mules. Today, equestrian use is one of the popular recreational activities along the Buffalo River, giving visitors access to many of the area's scenic features and the rich history of the Ozark Mountains.

The park maintains more than 75 miles of designated equestrian trails. The most extensive horse trail network is in the Upper District, with fewer trails in the Middle and Lower Districts. Some users navigate using topo maps or friends as guides. In some areas, the horse trail segments and river crossings are not well-defined and undesignated (and unmaintained) trails have emerged over time, along old roads and traces. The following trails are designated Horse Trails: Bench Trail, Cecil Cove, Old River Trail, Centerpoint, Chimney Rock, Sneeds Creek, Buffalo River Trail from Woolum to Gilbert only, Cow Creek-Cook Hollow Loop Trail (Hathaway Trailhead), and the railroad trail out of Gilbert.

Riders who want to use the park for a long-distance linear ride need special permission to use non-designated trail segments. Maintenance of trails and lack of an Environmental Assessment for a long-distance horse trail has prevented its creation. Horseback riders who ride long distance through the park may set up horse camps in the wilderness. For riders, there is some confusion about park management's support for the activity.

The park does not have a horse-back riding concession; all equestrians bring their own horses. This involves special logistical requirements, including access and parking for horse trailers. Riders need to know the water level in order to plan fords.

Hikers

In addition to the 75 miles of trails described above which are shared by horseback riders and hikers, an additional 25 miles of maintained trails are available for hikers only. These trail systems also offer numerous side hikes to locations that showcase the natural and human history that have shaped the region.

The park provides a range of hiking opportunities, including accessible-friendly trails, short self-guiding loops, and rugged hiking. Hikers tend to demonstrate Leave-No-Trace skills and wilderness values.

Hikers have commented on the difficulty of locating trailheads, even when they have maps and are in the designated parking areas.

There are two long-distance trails in the park:

- Buffalo River Trail begins near Whitely Cemetery in Boxley Valley, and winds along the bluffs, gravel bars, and banks for approximately 40 linear miles, down to the picnic area near the Pruitt access.
- The Old River Trail (ORT) starts below Boxley; at the low water crossing, intertwines with the Buffalo River Trail, and includes numerous river crossings to excite the more adventurous hiker.

Campers

Campground audiences may not participate much with guided float trips or formal interpretive programs. Interpreters have had more success with "quality contacts" (informal meetings with individual groups) than with formal programs.

RV campers typically stay 5-7 days (there is a 14-day limit.)

Hunters

Sport hunting is permitted within the Buffalo National River and is specifically authorized in the enabling legislation. Hunting activities are balanced with continuing efforts to restore and maintain the natural environments to promote wildlife growth for future generations.

Hunting seasons, dates and regulations, and licensing requirements are determined by the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission. Hunters primarily use the park campgrounds in October and November.

The Buffalo River provides a premier setting for hikers, backpackers, naturalists, horseback riders, motorcyclists, hunters, fishermen, and campers. These user groups sometimes diverge and sometimes converge in their philosophies and the ways they engage with park resources.

The park actively monitors the river for safety, resource management, and compliance issues to create a safe atmosphere for visitors.

Curriculum-based Audiences. These educational groups access park programs, such as Day-By-the-Buffalo, to support the school's curriculum goals. This audience can include distance learning groups.

Park Neighbors. This includes those living in immediately adjacent communities with strong ties to the park, as well as regional residents, which may include individuals and members of organizations instrumental in the establishment of the park.

Traditional Users

The core principal that underlies discussions of this audience group is trust. Informal and extemporaneous interpretation may be effective in improving community relations with this audience.

Multi-Generational Families, Large Groups

This audience may include church groups, family reunions, and youth events. Many of these visits involve not only day-use, but camping or lodging as well. Logistics are especially important to people who are making plans for, or traveling with, larger groups. Sufficient, accessible, and well-organized picnic areas and group campsites need to be arranged in advance of the visit. Parking, restrooms, and options for inclement weather are important.

Many of the activities in which large groups engage require them to have a Special Use Permit in place. The park's Concession Management team provides guidance to these groups through phone and email conversations, as well as through printed information conveyed on the Special Use Permits. This includes orientation to natural and cultural resources, and regulations applying to those resources.

Reservations with concession- or ranger-led tours may help to provide a focus and coordination to the group's adventure. Other groups may have had enough experience in the park to guide themselves.

People who travel with others may find that the plans on the group hinge on the needs of a few. If some members of the group have mobility concerns or time restraints, this may affect everyone.

Indoor exhibit spaces may not work well for larger groups. It may be that social interaction among group members is more important than interaction with interpretive media.

Brochures or wayside exhibits may work best when one group member reads the information to others. Similarly, Junior Ranger or other youth activities can include reference to elders in the group.

This audience may be interested in

interpretive media and programs if they are not generic but rather identify and interpret specific family histories and home sites. They may bring out-of-town visitors to the park's visitor centers. In preserving family histories through Buffalo National River's archives, collections, and interpretive media, the park may be instrumental in contributing to and focusing family and community pride.

Traditional Users may perceive resource management issues similarly to park, but they may not see those issues happening for the same reasons. This begs the question of whether the park values "local science" enough to provide a place for it in park conversations and interpretation.

There is a community that surrounds the park that has loved the land, culture, and history of the area before any part of the area was designated a national river. Many residents have traditional and current access to the tributaries of the Buffalo, and therefore have a significant influence over the health of the river. Perhaps by interpreting our own mistakes as an agency we may not only increase trust but improve protection of the resources by teaching by example.

Local residents often visit less-frequented areas of the park. Fiscal Year 2014 funding cuts that resulted in recent closures to some of these areas affected local users the most.

Specific interpretive venues may effectively convey the authenticity and character of this audience. Music and storytelling can link to genealogy and early residents' skills and crafts. This authentic avenue for teaching is passing away with time. Younger generations may or may not have a similarly intense love of the place, or share the character and authentic voice which distinguishes their ancestors.

Business Interests and Partners

This audience is not a typical audience group, as the park not only provides interpretation services to them but depends on them to provide interpretation to the other four audience groups.

Local Businesses, Concessions, and Chambers of Commerce

Members of this audience group provide essential services to the park's visitors, including aspects of invitation, welcome, orientation, resource protection, recreation, and interpretation. Some park events (night sky programs, big volunteer events, celebrations) bring more people than usual to hotels, restaurants, outfitters, shops, etc. and so are mutually beneficial.

Partners, Volunteers, and Agencies

The missions of several local, state, and federal agencies share elements of Buffalo National River's Management Goals Related to Interpretation and Education (see Interpretive Partners section below.) Park staff members seek out opportunities to maximize the effectiveness of interpretation and education work through collaboration with the various agencies.

One important task which is required of park staff is to have "shovel-ready" projects prepared which can be matched with funding and staffing opportunities. This requires that Environmental Assessments be completed, compliance issues be resolved, and the best placement of interpretive themes and media on the landscape be determined.

Volunteers need direction, support, oversight, and recognition. Volunteers who work with public outreach are supervised by the park's Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management. The park provides recognition to volunteers at special events and through press releases.

Underserved Audiences. This group includes culturally and economically diverse audiences, as well as non-English speakers and readers.

New Audiences

This category of visitors includes people who are having their first experiences with the park. New audiences may be learning through websites, other media outlets, organized groups, or may unexpectedly find themselves at the park while on their way to somewhere else. As regional and national demographics change, this audience group may represent an especially important interface between the National Park Service and our country's residents.

The first visit to Buffalo National River may be a once-in-a-lifetime event or the beginning of a tradition for new audiences. Welcome, orientation, and the option of introductory recreational experiences may be critical to this group. The park's developed infrastructure, including picnic areas, entrance signs, outdoor exhibits, and restrooms convey messages about value and respect simply by the way they are or are not maintained.

Informal and extemporaneous conversations with park staff may be reassuring to new audiences. Individual attention and encouragement may be important to people who are experimenting with new outdoor experiences.

The park has several trails that lend themselves to new audiences, as a consequence of their high visibility, developed infrastructure, and allure, including Lost Valley, Panther Creek, Indian Rock House Trails. Trails like these may provide entry-level hiking experiences to urban visitors who are more comfortable with people around. In addition, picnic areas may be seen as park entry points for "new" Americans.

The Upper District may be the place most discovered by new audiences. Elk viewing and fall colors may bring day-use visitors into the park.

Introductory audiences pose several questions for park staff:

- How can a park be challenging, without being seen as alien?
- How can first-time users be prepared for the "great outdoors," if they don't know what to be prepared for?
- How can new audiences learn about Leave-No-Trace principles before arriving at the park?

Recreation Visits – (FY2014)

Source: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE Public Use Statistics: https://irma.NationalParkService.gov/Stats/Reports/Park

- Annual recreation visit numbers show visitation to Buffalo National River in a general downward trend in the five years from 2010 to 2014.
- The largest number of visits, comprising almost half of the annual total, are concentrated between May and July.

Appendix 4 — Servicewide Interpretive Report (2014)

Source: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE Servicewide Interpretive Report
(internal National Park Service access only): http://inside.National Park Service.gov/sir/

Fiscal Year Interpretive Expenditures
Park Interpretive Funds Spent (NPS Base only) $570,492
Servicewide Fee Funds Spent $0
Reimbursable Fee Funds Spent (16USC 1a-2g) $0

Personal Services

	Number of Times Service Provided	Number of Different Facilities	Total Work Years	Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Total NPS Salary and Benefits Only	Total All Other Funding Costs
Visitor Centers / Contact Stations		3	3.00	15,302		
Informal Interpretation			.80	6,091	$171,136	$0
Formal Interpretation	197		1.00	2,209	$50,519	$7,000
Demonstrations and Performing Arts	13		0.00	196	$60,662	$5,000
Junior Ranger Programs			0.30	258	$19,727	$0
Special Events	5		0.10	76	$10,548	$0
Education Programs	37		1.60	768	129,333	$0
Subtotal Personal Services	252	3	6.8	24,900	$441,925	$12,000

Non-Personal Services

	Number of Different Services	Total Work Years	Number Distributed	Total NPS Salary and Benefits Only
Park-Produced Publications	12	0.10	34,960	$1,239
Audio-Visual / Electronic Media	2	0.10		$7,392
Subtotal Non-Personal Services	14	0.20	34,960	$8,631

Outreach Services

	Number of Times Service Provided	Total Work Years	Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Number Distributed	Total NPS Salary and Benefits Only
Community Programs	84	0.10	4,046		$6,104
Park Web Site		0.10		679,062	$11,782
Subtotal Outreach Services	84	0.20	4,046	679,062	$17,886

Column Totals

Number of Times Service Provided	Number of Different Facilities	Number of Different Services	Total Work Years	Total Number of Visitor Contacts	Number Distributed	Total NPS Salary and Benefits Only	Total All Other Funding Costs
336	3	14	7.2	28,946	714,022	$468,442	$12,000

Appendix 5 – Education Program – Notes from Workshop

The resource management staff have the enthusiasm and the subject matter expertise to craft programs for older students, in particular, that are longer in duration (camps, projects) and deeper in content (karst, hydrology, land use). The addition of a Mosaics in Science intern (http://www.geosociety.org/mosaics/) or GeoCorps America intern (http://rock.geosociety.org/g_corps/index.htm) or George Melendez Wright Climate Change Intern (http://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/internshipsandresearch.htm) could provide additional staffing to assist in developing and/or implementing such programs, or to serve as a back-up field scientist to free up the Resource Management staff to develop and conduct the programs. This can be accomplished in the short term, without additional permanent or term staff.

If one additional FTE position were available, it would be most strategic to hire a full-time, dedicated Education Specialist (GS-09 or GS-11, depending on the level of sophistication envisioned by the management team for the position), who would develop partnerships and programs, and coordinate their delivery across the park's three districts and in the surrounding schools. Ideally, the incumbent would have a rigorous science teaching background and would serve as liaison between the resource management staff, the university scientists working out of Toney Bend, and the interpretive staff, school teachers, and administrators. Depending on how the university partners feel about it, it could be a subject-to-furlough position funded half the year by the NPS, and half the year by the university. In the interim, the park could begin the process by hiring a term GS-07/09 Ed Tech/Ed Specialist who would focus less on the partnerships and relationships, and more on the content and programming.

In order to produce cultural resource education programs, the park could consider tasking one of the existing interpretive staff with the development of rigorously standards-aligned cultural resource education programs. They can work with a Teacher Ranger Teacher to outline a strategy for crafting programs that not only serve the park's interpretive needs, but also the needs of teachers. The ranger-TRT team could then write lesson plans to be delivered by rangers that will address subjects teachers have to teach as part of their geography, social studies, history, or even English language arts curriculum.

Specific-Subject Programs

Create a menu of programs on a variety of subjects from which teachers can select, with science offerings that allow students to actually "do" science, as opposed to just learn about it, especially on the following subjects:

- karst and hydrology; and
- night sky and bats.

Another potentially strong area of education may involve English-language arts programming (poetry, etc.) inspired by the Buffalo as a free-flowing river.

Specific-Audience Programs

The park may develop programs that are intended to serve a particular target audience.

- Professional development opportunities for teachers at Toney Bend, including the chance to conduct research alongside university faculty and/or students;
- Project-based learning opportunities for homeschoolers, including science fair projects, and thematic units that include multiple encounters with park resources;
- In-depth science programming for older students (high school, some college). This might include:

- Citizen science projects, with interesting results shared via social media platforms
- Farming practices in the past and present, a program that could be done at Collier and/or Boxley
- The impact of extractive industries and logging on the river
- The impact of the introduction of non-native species on the landscape
- The impact of extreme weather events on the river, with a tie to climate change; and

- Career pipeline opportunities for high school and college students through partner-funded (BassPro, tribal organizations) or park-funded internships in a variety of career fields – science, interpretation, maintenance.

Longer programs

Engage the same group of students in multiple park experiences over a period of time, including:

- A series of programs on recreational skills, potentially including guided canoe float trips with subject matter experts;
- A three (or more) field trip experience for students around the subjects of caves/karst and hydrology – one field trip in elementary school, another in middle school, and another in high school – increasing in complexity and diverse in subject matter, but perhaps all taking place in a "teaching cave" designated for the program; and
- Modify the popular "Day by the Buffalo" program to address standards and developmental characteristics specific to elementary, middle school, or high school participants.

Continue some of the park's residential programs (defined here as consecutive multiple-day experiences, with or without overnights), or the development of new ones, including:

- Summer Stream Ecology Camps (or other subjects, such as karst/hydrology, caves); and

Career-focused overnight camp programs for high school students, possibly located out of Toney Bend.

Appendix 6- Participant Comments from 2009 Draft General Management Plan

The following list of comments is a partial transcription of the flipcharts from public meetings held in 2009. The suggestions are largely dependent on management policies and priorities. The lists below are organized into topics related to the park's seven Visitor Experience Goals, and have been used to inform the recommendations of this Long-Range Interpretive Plan.

Visitor Experience Goal: Access

Audiences have universal access to facilities, historic sites, interpretive programs, and media. The high standards at which these resources are presented convey a sense of welcome to diverse audiences.

Visitor Centers

- Add visitor center at Hathaway Gap.
- Develop a museum with info about Osage and other Native Americans.
- Develop exhibit on local culture (i.e., Boxley Valley.)
- Display prehistoric artifacts.
- Don't sell goods in visitor center made overseas—sell American- and locally-made.
- Enhance the Visitor Center at Buffalo Point. Give it some style, class.

- Establish a visitor center focusing on Native American Tribes / Pioneers of the Buffalo River area.
- Establish a visitor center in Boxley Valley.
- Improve/enlarge Pruitt Visitor Center.
- Increase size of Buffalo Point Ranger Station (visitor center) and keep longer hours.
- Interactive exhibits for children.
- Keep Buffalo Point Campground contact station open while campground is open (currently is open 3 months a year.)
- Keep nature (river) natural- don't commercialize. (e.g., Gaston Visitor Center blends in with the bluffs.)
- More hands-on interpretive features in visitor centers; like at Ponca Elk Center.
- Museum for artifacts.
- Museum in Boxley Valley area. Osage, Cherokee, Pioneers—artifacts from all cultures.
- Need visitor center on Hwy 7 and Hwy 14.
- Pruitt needs a visitor center.
- Put historical artifacts and collections out for public to see—exhibit area.
- The park needs a visitor center on both the upper and lower end of the river; i.e., Buffalo Point and Pruitt.
- There is no visitor center in the upper district.
- Visitor center in upper district needs to be at Pruitt (Hwy 7.)

Signs

- Better directional signs for the entire park.
- Better launch location signs from river. Location of signs, not bigger signs.
- Better signage along river with mile markers.
- Better trail marking between trail type: horse, hiking, multi-use, etc.
- Bigger and better leash law signs.
- Do not put signs with mile markers. Too commercial, use topo maps.
- Improve trail markings for hiking and multi-use. Consider different color schemes, patterns, and heights for riders.
- Increase size and quality of regulatory and informational signs.
- Mark established trails better, especially at river crossings.
- Need general improvements in signage at all river access points.
- Signage with GPS coordinates for emergency extraction
- Trails should be well-marked.

Visitor Experience Goal: Significance of the River

Audiences gain an increased understanding of the river's significance, and gain insight for how Buffalo National River relates to other places in their lives.

Interpretive Programs

- Have interpretive programs for adults.
- Interpretation of the historic zinc mines at Rush. Keep one open to the public. Living history mine.
- More education programs for kids in campgrounds, amphitheaters, along river.
- More environmental education for all age groups; both in-park and outreach programs
- More interpretive outreach.

- More interpretive programs needed to preserve the Ozark culture and pre-historic culture.
- Need living history (or demonstrations) of farming and pioneer settlement.
- Need more adult-oriented programs to interpret Buffalo River.
- Need something on geology, formation types, ages, minerals—exhibits or programs.
- Offer programs on natural resources, Dutch oven cooking, geocaching, bird walk, wood carving, etc. Things to increase community involvement. Example: Bull Shoals State Park have programs in place.
- We need more educational and interpretive programs.

Wayside Exhibits

- Add signage at homesteads, cemeteries, i.e., who lived there, dates, times, interesting facts (were they farmers? Did they contribute something unusual to community?)
- CCC quarry. Put up a static display or some type of exhibit on history of CCC. Why the red limestone. Geologic history, etc.
- Have signs or interpretive exhibits at historic sites (i.e. cattle dipping vat, old wells, homesteads.)
- Like restoration / interpretative exhibits at Parker-Hickman site. Continue this practice, but don't overdo signage.
- More interpretive information on hiking trails, about homesteads, cemeteries, etc.
- More self-guiding interpretation of homesteads.
- Need more informational plaques at historic structures.
- Need more signage at homesteads (who was there, when, highlights about their life- like Granny Henderson's house.)
- Old house and barn at Mt. Hersey needs to be saved. Information about what happened there.
- Ponca, down from Villines—provide access to and interpret Indian marker tree.
- Use existing structures for cultural and natural history education.

Exhibits

- Remember the "unique culture" of the Ozark people and the present changing population. Interpret the true culture rather than a caricature.
- More Native American cultural information.

Audio/Video

- Audio tour of historic sites / structures.
- Do an in-depth documentary (DVD series) of the Buffalo River. Sell and put $ back into the park. (History, ecology, fish and wildlife, mining)

Media

- Buffalo National River needs NATIONAL PARK SERVICE-sponsored "fam" tours for media.
- Encourage year-round tourism—spread use throughout the year.

Maps

- Develop cultural map for cemeteries.
- Need a real good map (like a key) that shows homesteads (i.e. Rush Landing) or a DVD about the history of homesteads, where located.
- Need better tear-off maps. Too near same colors to read easily.

Publications

- Create interpretive trail information for historic sites and structures.

Visitor Experience Goal: Immersive Experiences

Audiences are provided with opportunities to be physically and imaginatively engaged in the park's landscapes and riverscapes. Audiences are equipped to safely navigate through these journeys.

ATVs

- Allow ATV use for hunting big game in most areas of the park.
- Consider ATV trails.
- Develop 4-wheel trails in the park.
- Do not designate ATV trails for recreational use.
- Establish permit system for ATV use on County Roads that run through the park.
- Establish permit system for ATV use to access specific areas of the park.
- Handicap accessible for hunters (ATVs).
- Issue permits for ATV use for sightseeing. One day permits.
- Leave 4-wheelers and ATVs outside park.
- No 4-wheelers, ruts up area.
- Park Service should not ride ATVs in park.

Safety

- At key points (history of accidents) place basic first aid equipment (backboards, straps) to be turned in down river at take-out.
- Bridges in park (65, 14, and 7—Hasty and Carver) should have pedestrian/equestrian crossings on bridge for safety.
- Caution sign—swimmers at Camp Orr.
- Dangerous canoe launch site at Steel Creek; consider modifying site for visitor safety.
- Educate hikers regarding safe interaction with horses.
- Move Steel Creek launch upstream for safety.
- Payphones needed at all take-outs. Those that take change, not just credit cards.
- Re-engineer the upper portion of Lost Valley Trail. Two carry-outs this year, roots trip people.

Campground Infrastructure

- Need a Class-A campground in the Upper District.
- Need more drive-through pay-site campgrounds in Middle District (with showers and electrical hook ups.
- Need more showers and hook-ups.
- People ask for RV parking/ camping.
- Plenty of maintained campsites riverwide.
- Steel Creek and Kyle's need to be paved.

Motorboats

- Access points for flat bottom boats; launch areas for trailers.
- Allow electric motors from Kyle's Landing downstream to Erbie. Especially helpful for fishing.
- Limit outboard motor use in more areas to preserve the quality of the river experience. Limit speed and HP of boats on river to reduce bank erosion. Or eliminate use.
- Motorboat horsepower should be raised. A 9.9 doesn't have enough power to get up over shoals.

- No motorized boating except for handicapped, and must be handicapped.
- Problem with jon boats on lower river. Recommend no motorized boats. They don't yield to canoes-cause major waves.
- Raise boat motor horse power to 15 or above.
- Require 4-stroke motors on Buffalo River. No 2-strokes.
- Restrict gasoline motors and replace with electric to preserve handicapped access.
- Restrict the use of motorized watercraft through wilderness.
- Would like to see no motorboats on the Buffalo River. (Maybe a couple of miles upriver from the White River could be open.)

Camping Reservations

- Like reserving group sites on internet. (Check discrepancy between total available sites and going to actual link to reserve.)
- Set up web-based reservation system for overnight camping.

Recreational Vehicle Camping

- Add electric and water (full hook-ups) in a new loop at Tyler Bend.
- An entrance (info only, no fee) station for Buffalo Point campground. Needs to accommodate RVs.
- Ban generators from park and trailers with lots of lights.
- Develop improved campgrounds in the middle part of the river (South Maumee.)
- Do not increase the developed areas. Not every campground has to be like Buffalo Point Campground.
- Enforce quiet hours in campgrounds. No generators after 10 p.m.
- Happy the way it is.
- Modern facilities—campgrounds, showers, etc.
- Need developed campground in Upper District.
- Need more first-come, first-served sites at Buffalo Point and less reserved sites.
- Need to keep Buffalo Point campground open year-round.
- No electric, hookups—no RV camping.
- No RV parking at non-camping launch sites.
- No wifi.
- Really like the campground at Tyler Bend.

Canoe Infrastructure

- Additional kayaks needed so visitors can get the vessels they want. Concessioners are turning visitors away because there are not enough kayaks.)
- Better access at Rush Landing (boats) and larger parking lots. (Maybe two launch sites.)
- Consider new launch areas for commercial use only (relieve congestion).
- Don't want larger, improved, or more launches for commercial or private use.
- Establish rental boat allocations or quotas per day for each discrete river stretch.
- Larger / improved river launches.
- Limit the number of canoe launches on busy days. Stagger the launch times.
- More access at Hasty to allow

vehicles on gravel bar.

- More canoe launch sites.
- More room at Hasty Launch. Look at area downstream of new bridge-- hay fields.
- No more canoe launches; enough development already, because it will attract too many visitors.
- Please clear old ferryboat launch at Hwy 14. So visitors can get to river away from commercial launch activities.
- Put-in times as golf courses have tee times. To accommodate maximum number.
- Register before floating- put-in and take-out (trailhead self-registration box for private users.)
- Reopen old river accesses behind hayfield gates, without destroying fields.
- River is closed off to qualified paddlers. Need to allow waiver that provides them with access during high water- above where it is closed now.
- Solve launching congestion at Rush.
- To reduce congestion (Lower District) at take-outs, require concessioners to provide 2-way shuttle service for people. This will improve visitor safety and reduce resource damage. Consider same for Upper District.

Access

- Disagree with park closures of local's access to historical use areas (i.e., Sand Gap, South Maumee.)
- Equal access needed for people who don't ride horses. Like the primitive experience, but need something closer than 80 mile road trip.
- Make trails wider for accessibility and flatter where possible. Have telescopes to look through where trails are not accessible.
- More access for handicap but limit resource disturbance.
- Open park more to handicap uses; fishing, trails… need communication assistance.
- Park closed off too much of the Lower River. Folks in Lower District don't have as many options as other two districts.
- Some cemeteries can't be accessed by the older generation. Allow ATV or golf cart, or UTVs, just to access the cemeteries.
- Close vehicle access to remote areas along river due to inappropriate use.

Steel Creek Horse Camp

- Improve Steel Creek for RV parking- water, elect, etc. This is for horse camping
- Establish paid horse camping, at Steel Creek Horse Camp- to generate $ for improvements/better facilities for horse campers.
- Steel Creek- make new ways to use it creatively.
- Safer access into Steel Creek.
- More horse sites sat the Steel Creek Horse Camp.
- Create shade shelters/trees for Steel Creek Horse Camp.
- Electric hookups at Steel Creek for tent & horse camp.

Woolum Horsecamp

- Need more picket line poles at Woolum horse camp- keeps horses from eating trees.
- Improve camping for horseback use at Woolum.
- Woolum Campground- horses should be allowed at Lower end of

camping area near swimming area.

- Install more hitching posts in the Woolum Campground (throughout the camping area.)
- Build a real horse camp at Woolum with water, shade, and a few stalls. Nothing too fancy, pickets, primitive.

Tilting Rock Horse Camp

- Improve Tilting Rock horse camp (back country camp.)

Erbie Horsecamp

- Consider second horse camp at Erbie — inside existing campground.
- Disagree with second horse camp at Erbie.
- Do not need water and more spots for horsecamping at Erbie.
- Erbie Horse Camp. It is a nice place. Contact Village Creek State Park on Crowley's Ridge for ideas on improvements.
- Maintain places like Erbie where we can turn horse trailers around, and easy camping access.
- Need existing pond to be cleaned out, re-lined, for horse use at Erbie.
- Need more spots for horsecamping at Erbie.
- Provide water and phone at Erbie Horsecamp.
- Very happy with changes at Erbie (accommodates horse use.)

Additional Horse Camps

- A couple of horse camps in each district.
- Add horse camp at Carver, and in the Tyler Bend Area.
- Develop equine center anywhere on the river; camping facility with accommodations like stalls, corrals, showers, trailer hook-ups. Gladly pay a fee for it.
- Development at South Maumee.
- Disagree with all horse camping in the park.
- If one couple of horse users are kept out of the Buffalo, that has an economic impact of greater than $15,000.
- Lower Districts need horse camps—primitive OK—tables and fire rings and Romtec toilet (Hathaway trailhead.)
- Make a primitive horse camp at Carver.
- More horse camps with water and electric hook-ups park-wide.
- More horse camps, park-wide.
- Would like to see a campground for horses developed at Boxley.
- Would like to see more horse camps, both primitive and developed.

Horse Infrastructure Needs

- Parking at north end of Hwy 65 Bridge is too small for horse use.
- More parking area for horseback riding.
- Need for horse trailer parking.
- Larger trailheads to accommodate horse trailers.
- Install hitching post at Hemmed-In-Hollow.
- Install more posts for picket lines in the horse camps.
- Better access for trailer and parking at trailheads.
- Horse camps need hook-ups (electric and water.)
- Better or separate trailheads for horses (turn-arounds, parking for trailers.)

- Highline posts in horse camp area (like horse camp at Sorghum Hollow near Mt. Magazine.
- Future horse trails need to follow terrain more and less extreme slopes.
- Horse camps need to accommodate larger trailers.
- Restrict horse use on/near the river.
- Set restrictions on the number of horses in any one group.
- Set limits on horses in the park.
- Restrict horse camping to developed horse camps only. Don't permit backcountry horse camping.

Designation of Trails

- Classify as official trails: Helsey Hollow, Razorbarr, Trimble Bluff (east side of river north of Elephant Head.)
- Designate certain sections of trail open to mountain bikes.
- Trails in south section (Hathaway Trail) need to be designated so they can be improved.
- Trails should be designed to accommodate intended use.
- Trails unofficial. Need to be designated.

Social Trails

- Better manage social trails, i.e., Indian Creek.
- Don't close social trails just because they aren't officially designated now. Don't officially designate to keep use low (less damage, hunting, etc.)
- Evaluate social trails and consider official trail designation for appropriate trails.
- Evaluate social trails for official designation (Lower Wilderness Area)—spreads use out for less resource damage.
- Remove / rehabilitate social trails in Ponca Wilderness.

Horse Trails

- Access to natural world via horseback relieves stress and clears the head.
- Add/develop horse trail the full length of the river.
- Allow horse use on old trails and traces. Keep open also for pack stock.
- Concern with horse damage to trails, especially erosion; diminishing hikers' experience. Mostly occurring on Center Point and Compton Trails.
- Continue to provide horseback riding use as is—no significant resource damage.
- Disagree with all horse riding in the park.
- Do not want to see horse trails expanded in the park.
- Expand horse trails, designed to minimize erosion and allow for multiple use (with hikers.)
- Have trails suitable for horses and carriages.
- Horse Trail from Pruitt to Woolum for a long-distance ride; horse camp at Carver.
- I don't want horse trails to go away.
- Make sure horse riding on old trace is preserved.
- More designated horse trails in Lower Buffalo Wilderness!
- More horse trails designated in Lower Buffalo area.
- More horse trails to disperse impacts.

- More loop trails for day rides.
- No horses. Upper River damages to crossings, causes erosion.
- Repair/fix horse trails in Upper District—erosion.
- Unofficial road trace on Rose Ridge and Avery Ridge should be designated as an official horse trail and should be maintained.

Tent Camping

- Allow NATIONAL PARK SERVICE to evict campers who are unreasonably disturbing their neighbors (rather than causing law-abiding campers to leave.
- More tent camping at Steel Creek, Lost Valley, Kyle's, Ozark, Pruitt, etc.
- Open up Carver Campsite to accommodate more tent camping.
- Built-up tent pads, fire grates, tables. (Gravel would work.)
- Adding additional camping (for overflow) at Ozark and Steel Creek- in the hayfield.
- Steel Creek: add showers, better delineate campsites.
- Would like to see a campground at Hasty.
- Re-establish camping at Hasty—2-4 sites in the woods.
- On Lower Buffalo (from Rush on down) leave as is- privilege of picking your campsite on gravel or sand bars.
- Designate proper campsites at Woolum, Grinder's Ferry, and Gilbert, since they are designated camping areas.
- Stop camping in parking area at Shine Eye.

Back Country Camping

- Back country campsites need better management. Fire rings cleaned up. Too much trash.
- Continue camping on gravel bars.
- Eliminate some of the trails and fire rings in Ponca wilderness.
- Enjoy primitive camping along river and trails.
- Establish backcountry campsites (pack-it-in, pack-it-out) (free, by permit?)
- Keep backcountry / gravel bar camping for multiple day float trips.
- Keep primitive camping in park—don't develop- too noisy—affects park experiences, i.e., bird watching.
- More primitive development.
- Remove visible evidence (signs, hitching posts) along river in wilderness areas

Hunting

- Guided hunting could increase hunting. Would not like to see more hunting.
- Guided hunting for big game only.
- Guided hunting OK for elk (better herd control) but not for other game.
- Have feral hog hunting year-round. Already state-wide, just not in the park.
- Legalize dog hunting for feral hog control.

Other Forms of Recreation

- Keep bicycle use the same.
- Limit numbers of tubers and restrict to section of Spring Creek to Buffalo Point.
- No jet skis.

Additional Concessions for Guided Activities

- Additional guide service permits: fishing, etc. (seasonal perhaps).
- Allow concession permits for small, independent guides.
- Allow guided activities (hunting, horseback, hiking) as long as it does not conflict with non-guided visitor activities.
- Disagree with taking fishing guides off concession contracts and issuing Commercial Use Agreements.
- Disagree with user's fee.
- Need concession horse rides for people who don't own or travel with horses. This is a needed visitor service for people who want to see the park without canoeing.
- No guided horse use. Keep horse trails for private riding. (No commercial guides.)
- Open opportunities for guided horse use, guided hunting, etc.
- Park should collect a floater fee from concessioners for river cleanup; that way you wouldn't have to rely on volunteers.
- Take fishing guides off of concession contracts and issue Commercial Use Agreements.

Commercial Services

- Commercial services at South Maumee- hotel.
- Consider vending in the park: food services, wifi opportunities, etc.
- Do economic modeling of river's assets to park neighbors and community. How to protect watershed to protect economic value. Explore electronic instead of paper contracts.
- Park partner with neighbors to provide services—out –of-park facilities, camping, horses, food service—rather than inside the park.

Special Events

- Re-establish canoe races as was done in the 1970s. (Concession-sponsored?)
- Rainbow Gathering allowed in Upper Buffalo Wilderness. Too many people at once, temporary facilities. Why is this allowed?

Dogs

- Choose some trails in a District for hikers to walk dogs on leashes. (In Jan 2009, dog-friendly trails are: Lost Valley, buffalo Point, Mill Creek Trail.)
- Dogs permitted on all park trails as long as they are on a leash.
- Keep dogs off trails- unsafe.
- Keep dogs out of the swimming areas for protection of children.
- More dog-friendly trails.
- Need a place/trail to walk a dog on leash.
- No dogs on trails.
- Permit dogs on all trails for safety.
- Strict enforcement park-wide of leash law. Bigger and better signs.

Fishing

- Want stricter small-mouth management, i.e. catch and release. (Zones, slot limits.)
- Consider catch and release policy to improve fish populations.
- In favor of barbless hooks, at least in some sections. Want to improve bass fishing.
- Better enforcement of current fishing regulations.
- Fish quality, "Blue Ribbon" section of river. Similar to Kings River.

- Fishing has fallen off over the years.

Swimming

- Enlarge and keep clear swim areas, tree and debris removal.
- Information needed for location of swimming holes, quiet places- more than the standard information park provides.
- Identify some really great swimming holes along the river.

Hiking

- Hiking groups are too large, trail damage, noise problems, etc. Six should be considered a maximum number.
- Consider park guides with large groups on trails.

Caving

- Open more caves to guided tours
- Promote caves that can be visited without use of technical equipment.
- Protection of caves and karst resources while allowing public access inside caves.

Hiking Trails

- A single well-developed trail through the wilderness.
- At Hathaway: from bottom of trail to the Turkey Mountain "cross", clean and remove brush- difficult for hikers Mow trail from Woolum to Rockhouse (barns).
- Baby Boomers need more access to the park; gets harder for older folks to make steep hikes. Cedar Creek and Cook Hollow need to be evaluated as good places for this group to hike.
- Build more trails (dual use, or separate horse and hiking trails) in Middle District.
- Complete Ozark Highland Trail on Buffalo National River as promised in 1977. (Hwy 14 to USFS Spring Creek trailhead.)
- Connect Buffalo River trails through AGFC property from Gene Rush to Robertson Hill.
- Construct and maintain a trail to the Lafoon Cemetery.
- Control horse and people trails. Limit number of trails and access.
- Do something to preserve Indian Creek while allowing public access.
- Keep all established trails open (20+ years' use).
- Keep primitive horse/hiking trails primitive. Preserve solitude. No motorized vehicles in these areas.
- Like to see the Ozark Highland Trail connected (90 mile section) to the USFS Sylamore Section. Actually, complete OHT thru the BNR.
- Maintained trail at swimming hole at Bowman Place at Clabber Creek.
- Make all trails "full tread" trails. Force all volunteer trail crews to build full tread trails under park supervision.
- Maybe there is an advantage to having trails along the river and in the floodplain as they are naturally closed and rejuvenated by deposition.
- More trail work, maintain trails in a better way, etc. Pruitt to Carver to Woolum.
- More trailheads needed at campgrounds.
- Move trailhead at Steel Creek access above canoe put-in.
- Need to clean up Spencer Trail (by Hathaway).
- Need to improve and mark trails from Gilbert to the White River.

- People looking for handicapped accessible trails.
- Provide a trail from Indian Rock House return to the parking area, to prevent people from walking on road.
- Route a trail by a cave with a large opening so that visitors can see a cave (a cave that doesn't have sensitive or endangered species.)
- Some areas need to be off limits to horses and/or heavy foot traffic.
- Would like to see loop trails.

Multi-Use Trails

- Build and maintain multi-use trail from Pruitt to Woolum.
- Combine horse and hiking trails (all trails.)
- Do not want to see horse users and hikers on the same trails, because of erosion. (Social trails develop parallel to original.)
- Find alternative multi-use trails from South Maumee to Dillards Ferry.
- Guidelines to show trail users whom should yield to whom.
- Horses destroy hiking trails.
- Keep trails separate from hiking trails (horse trails need to meet NATIONAL PARK SERVICE trails standards- reduce erosion; i.e. Compton Trail problems.
- Middle District needs primitive loop trails off of established trails (i.e., Coggins Field.) Multi-use.
- Multi-use trail for the entire river (out of flood plain.)
- Multi-use trail from Caver – Gene Rush – Woolum.
- Multi-use trails are good. Each user group does not need their own trail. There is less impact to the landscape with multi-use trails.
- Need a maintained, multi-use trail from Pruitt to Woolum. Needs to be officially designated and signed.
- Need a multi-use trail from Hathaway to Tilting Rock.
- No multi use trails. Don't mix horse and hiking trails.
- Open a multi-use trail to Woolum along or near Flatrocks Road coming in from Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area.
- Open access on south side of river through wilderness to mouth of Buffalo River where Buffalo River and White River meet (authorized horse/pedestrian trail—not open to vehicles and maintain the access/ trail.)
- Recognize existing trails in the General Management Plan for multi-use. From AR 7 to Woolum.
- Rules for shared trails—horse/ humans (i.e. move hiking sticks, don't spook horses. Horse users- let hikers know you are coming.
- Separation of horse and backpacking trails. Impact of horse use on hiking trail causes erosion and maintenance issues.
- Work with Arkansas Game and Fish to connect multi-use trails from Buffalo River Trail to Flat Rock Road.
- Would like to see multi-use trails in Lower District.

Visitor Experience Goal: Partnerships

Stakeholders and park staff work toward clear and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Volunteers

- Develop volunteer programs—trail maintenance.
- Solicit help from the community- help identify and locate wildlife we are trying to manage / protect.

Not-For-Profit Groups

- Horse education—trail riding/ camping. (Michael Steenbergen, Vice President of Arkansas Horse Council is willing to help with this.) Horse groups would be interested in Adopt-A-Trail.
- Partnership needed with Arkansas Horse Council to improve trails, education to help and be involved.
- Closer relationship with Camp Orr.
- Provide interpretive cooperation with Arkansas Audubon, "DOBC" (in Harrison and even to the Buffalo)—Bird watching!
- Arkansas Canoe Club—less complicated permitting process—develop partnerships for training (i.e. swift water rescue, paddling, teaching canoe and camping.)
- Partner with Boy Scouts of America and other groups to maintain backcountry areas.
- Boy Scouts of America is under-utilized. Use local troops more.

Other Communities

- Implement community service in park as part of sentencing for crimes.
- Open park to non-profit group activities.
- Ideal place to open park ranger or military training facility.

Visitor Experience Goal: Resource Protection

Audiences contribute toward the conservation of park resources and are vigilant in protecting the river's integrity.

Management

- As a park neighbor and user, I am pretty happy with how it is operated. I do not want to see any major changes in policy.
- Be careful of too much recreation and easy access.
- Can some of the uses be dispersed more to National Forests or other lands? (Horseback riding.)
- Consider permit system for private use, backcountry, river—daily use or annual permits.
- Disagree with permits for private use. No permits for anything unless absolutely necessary.
- Don't allow artificial activities in campgrounds, i.e. playgrounds.
- Don't let the Buffalo River turn into a resort.
- Emphasize river based recreation, not horses/hiking.
- If permit system is necessary due to over-use, consider system that doesn't have favoritism to concessioners and allows flexibility for individual visitors.
- Keep park as natural as possible; minimize commercial use.
- Keep private use opportunities for recreation.
- Keep the wilderness as wilderness. Do not pave, access, or commercialize.
- Keep what we have.
- Maintain a sense of freedom for visitors, don't over-restrict, rather, use education. Monitoring is important; teach visitors self-responsibility.
- Multi-use recreation. Do not restrict to one group of people.
- Never let a concessionaire take over the park!!!
- Observe wilderness rules of use and manage it as wilderness, not as a recreational area only.
- Return watershed to natural and undeveloped.

- Take care of what you have. Don't overdevelop. Near max carrying capacity.
- The number of concession boats on the river should be equal to the number of private boats.
- Would like to see traditional uses preserved. Hiking, canoeing, riding. Major source of income for area.
- Would prefer NATIONAL PARK SERVICE not restrict the number of people on the river.

Visitor Experience / Resource Protection (VERP) Research

- Carefully consider horseback use and evaluate potential impacts on water quality.
- Carrying capacity studies needed for horse use. Too much erosion.
- Collect good user data. Maybe require registration of users. Have organizations voluntarily report their members' use.
- Further study visitor use to track changes in use and how it has affected the visitor experience. It is important to study this to ensure opportunities for solitude are available to visitors. Impact studies are needed for preservation of the resources.
- Need to determine the right balance between making the park available to the public and restricting uses to protect it.
- Set carrying capacity on river use through Ponca Wilderness corridor.
- Use scientific data to make wise mgmt. decisions about user groups
- With increasing visitation, study park use.
- Would like to see horse users and hikers get together to work out their differences.

Scenic Viewsheds

- Acquire more land or negotiate easements with owners of surrounding lands so that no new construction is visible from the river.
- Add more scenic pull-offs along road (Hwy 43 to view/overlook Ponca Wilderness.) Pull-offs to view elk.
- Increase emphasis on watchable wildlife.
- More places to view elk and swans.
- Need parking area at Boxley Valley to view swans.
- Vegetative clearing for better understanding of historic landscapes.
- View of landscape from river needs better protection. New houses keep showing up visible from river.

Leave No Trace / Waste

- Better education of park users on waste disposals.
- Clean up toilet paper from trails. Teach more "Leave No Trace."
- Consider "Floaters' Education" for permitting.
- Encourage / require use of portable waste systems by visitors on the river.
- Establish spur trails from the river into fields for sanitary needs.
- Increase awareness of Leave No Trace ethic.
- Leave No Trace education should be increased among all user groups.
- Leave No Trace policy should be adopted for all user groups, and Leave No Trace procedures should be promoted by park staff, outfitters etc.
- Need more public education about

how to poop in the woods (Leave No Trace ethic).

- Need to address human waste on the gravel bars.
- No disposable diapers allowed on the river
- Require toilet boxes (rocket boxes, groover) on river trips for containing fecal material, to prevent littering, and preserve clean smells and water quality.
- Teach Leave No Trace at evening programs at amphitheaters in campgrounds.

Restrooms

- Install restrooms at more remote river locations to reduce waste along river banks (i.e. Margaret White, Crow Hole).
- Keep at least one bathroom in each location open year-round, park-wide.
- More public bathrooms at regular intervals, so people will not use gravel bars.
- Move Ponca and Steel Creek restrooms out of flood plain. Ponca restroom was underwater before construction was even finished.
- Put outhouses along horse and hiking trails. Toilet paper littering is a problem.

Natural Sound

- Keep radios and boom boxes OFF the river!
- No radios, boom boxes, or other amplified sources along the river.
- Limit # of people in one canoe to limit noise and improve safety.
- Maintain natural conditions along river (sounds and sights).
- Maintain the peace and quiet of the river.

Recycling

- Add recycle containers (aluminum, plastic) at all campgrounds and access points.
- Increase the number of recycling bins at each river access.
- Make recycling a priority for the park.
- Monofilament recycling areas at access points. Corps has program on line that is similar.

Trash

- Education / information to visitors about where to get mesh bags.
- Enforce Pack it in Pack it out.
- Improve state-wide education of river users to reduce litter.
- Install more trash cans at trailhead areas to accommodate trash.
- Keep it (river) clean—free of litter and good water quality.
- Make beach areas non-smoking so you don't have cigarette butts.
- Offer litter bags at access sites, trailheads.
- The more floaters there are, the more trash there is. Penalize the floaters for littering.

Hands-Off

- Get kids more involved, teach them why not to take rocks, etc., away. Identify what things were used for and why they're there. Like at Tyler Bend. A step further than what the park is doing now.
- More emphasis on not touching archeological artifacts.

Staffing

- How are you preparing children in this area for development of future management of park? (Developing young children for entrepreneurships.)

- Increase staffing in public outreach.
- Increase the number of employees in the park.
- Increase the number of rangers for increased backcountry patrols.
- Interpretive position (or natural, cultural instruction) duty stationed at Camp Orr.
- Let people know/teach them about dangers of river. (i.e. having volunteer / employees at launch sites.
- Lower District (probably parkwide) needs more access to park passes (Golden Age)—not enough employees authorized to issue them.
- Need a campground host at Rush. This means water/sewer/electric.
- Need more ranger presence on river.
- Need more rangers and more presence. For 133-mile park, need at least three times (36) the number of rangers. Western parks have larger staff, based on square mileage and river mileage.
- Problem with Law Enforcement. Feel like it is out-of-hand. Searching canoes coolers even after asked if you have glass. Searched at launch, on-river and at take-out.
- Rangers hiding in bushes, spying on visitors. Upstream from Hwy 65, middle of nowhere. Not necessary to have that much watching.
- Rangers need to be in access areas (put-ins not take-outs) during peak times.
- Run trail crews year-round.
- Set up a trail work liaison to go out and work with volunteer trail workers, able to bring chainsaws and other power tools forbidden to volunteers. Or train and certify sawyers on volunteer trail groups.
- Volunteers or employees to help horseback riders.
- We need a VIP coordinator!!! Full time.
- Would like to see more rangers helping visitors.
- Would like to see more rangers on the river on weekends and holidays, in spring and fall.

List of Participants

The following people contributed to this plan:

Buffalo National River

Kevin Cheri, Superintendent

Laura A. Miller, Deputy Superintendent

Caven Clark, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management

Bill Osterhouse, Facility Manager

Casey Johannsen, Park Guide

Chester Beck, Seasonal Park Interpreter

Chuck Bitting, Park Geologist

Cindy Bass, Fee Collection

Connie Moody, Administrative Officer

Faron Usrey, Aquatic Ecologist

Jared James, Administrative Assistant

Jason Flood, Lower District Ranger LE

Joyce Umbach, Middle District Interpreter

Karen Bradford, Chief Ranger

Katishia Gibbs, Budget Analyst

Keith Jefferson, Interpreter, Headquarters

Linda Bishop, Upper District Interpreter

Melissa (Missy) Baier, Archeologist/Curator

Melissa Moses, Upper District Ranger LE

Mike Simpson, Lower District Interpreter

Rochelle MacMillan, Concession Management Assistant

Sharon Deming, Superintendent's Secretary

Shawn Hodges, Aquatic Biologist

Teri Gage, Concessions Specialist

Terry Traywick, Tyler Bend Interpreter

Contributors and Partners

Bill Hemmer, Buffalo National River Partners

Anthony Bright, GOBS East Facilitator, Harrison High School

Elaine Appel, Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen

Evelyn Mills, Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen

Gerry Hemmer, Buffalo National River Partners

Jacque Alexander, Back Country Horsemen of America

Janet Nye, Ozark Society Member and landowner

Jason Haskin, President, Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield, Missouri

Larkin Floyd, Back Country Horsemen of America

Larry Davenport, Park Concessioner, Buffalo Point Cabins and Restaurant

Lee Walsh, Vice President, Searcy County Chamber of Commerce

Luke Davis, Compton Gardens

Mary Ann Hicks, Facility Manager, Ponca Elk Education Center, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Nathaniel Bright, Student, Harrison High School

Pam Floyd, Back Country Horsemen of America

Peggy Krohn, Regional Coordinator, Frog Watch

Rachel Roenfeldt, Cedar Crest Lodge and Cabins Board member

Ray Wiggs, Northwest Arkansas Regional Supervisor, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Ricky Chastain, Deputy Director, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

Sheilah Roenfeldt, Owner, Cedar Crest Lodge and Cabins in Ponca

Shelley Tomlinson, Science Specialist, OUR Educational Cooperative

Tom Krohn, Regional Coordinator, Frog Watch

National Park Service

Tom Richter, Chief of Interpreation, Midwest Region

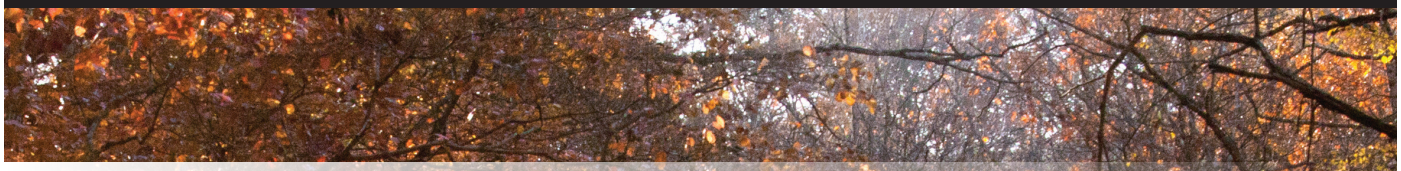
Mark Johnson, Planner, Harpers Ferry Center

Peggy Scherbaum, Interpretive Planner, Harpers Ferry Center

Stephanie Kyriazis, Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Cultural Resources, Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site

Theresa Johnson, Education Research Specialist, Heartland Network

Harpers Ferry Center
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Buffalo National River

402 North Walnut
Suite 136
Harrison, AR 72601
www.nps.gov/buff

