

LONG-RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

BENT'S OLD FORT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

SEPTEMBER 2006



**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
LONG-RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN**

**BENT'S OLD FORT
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE**

SEPTEMBER 2006

Prepared by

**Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

Intermountain Regional Office

**Harpers Ferry Center
Interpretive Planning**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Planning Background	5
Park Purpose	6
Park Legislative Significance	7
Park Significance.....	8
Park Mission.....	9
Primary Interpretive Themes	11
Visitor Experience Goals	15
Park User and Audience Profiles.....	17
Existing Conditions, Issues, and Influences.....	19
Recommendations and Implementations Strategies.....	32
Staffing and Training.....	56
Implementation Priorities.....	58
Appendix.....	60
-Location/Interpretive Service Guide	
-Current Park Staffing Diagram	
- Accessibility	
Bibliography.....	64
Planning Team and Consultants.....	65

INTRODUCTION

As you approach the gate, you smell a cottonwood campfire. Entering the plaza, you hear the clang of the blacksmith's hammer on an anvil. You are greeted by a guide in 19th-century garb muddled with adobe. Welcome to 1846! Welcome to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site!

Here is preserved the site and story of a famous trading post. The fort was one of the significant centers of the fur trade on the Santa Fe Trail. Built by Bent, St. Vrain & Company in 1833, the post was the center of a prosperous trading empire for 16 years. Strategically located, the fort paved the way for U.S. expansion as an instrument of manifest destiny.

Today Bent's Old Fort is reborn: faithfully reconstructed by the National Park Service in 1975-76 on the site of the original post. Interpreters in period clothing tell the important story of this crossroads of culture, where Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, and other cultures came together to trade.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site comprises just under 800 acres along the Arkansas River in southeastern Colorado. The site is located 8 miles east of La Junta or 13 miles west of Las Animas on Colorado Highway 194.

Though the fort is off the beaten path today, 170 years ago the post was the center of activity for this region. Today's visitors can come back to that time and experience the sights, sounds and smells of the past at the "Castle on the Plains."

This Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) recommends actions that should occur over the next seven to ten years. The plan is developed by park staff with the assistance of park stakeholders. It identifies park themes, describes visitors experience goals, and recommends a wide variety of personal and non-personal interpretive services and outreach activities that will best communicate the park's purpose, significance and themes. In concert with the park's Annual Implementation Plan and Interpretive Database, it completes the park's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, as established in DO-6. In addition, this planning process has been customized to meet the Individual Park's needs, conditions, and special circumstances. The ultimate product is an effective and efficient interpretive program that achieves management goals, provides appropriate visitor opportunities, and facilitates desired visitor experiences.

Work on this LRIP began in late 2001 when two interpretive planning workshops were conducted to gather consensus foundational information on Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site's significance and apply that information to the development of the desired future interpretive program for the park. The first workshop was attended by the entire planning group cited in the Appendix. The second workshop, attended by a smaller core team, developed this plan based on the work generated in the first workshop. Upon the change of park administration, additional meetings were held with stakeholders to update the material and generate this final plan.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants, who gave freely of their time and expertise to forge this document. As the vision for the park's interpretive efforts over the next five years, the Long-Range Interpretive Plan will be a much more effective and inclusive document due to their contributions.

Barring legislative changes or major new revelations, the foundational elements expressed in this LRIP – purpose, significance, themes, and visitor experience goals – will remain constant over the life of the plan. Specific recommendations about media and programs may need to be updated as staffing, funding, technology, or resource conditions change. Further design documents must be produced to implement some of the goals and recommendations in this plan.

PARK PURPOSE

Park Purpose describes why an area was set aside and what specific purpose exists for this area. Purpose is derived from legislation, legislative history, public participation, and public rule making. Purpose statements may reflect upon traditional purposes of preservation and enjoyment, the linkages between the management unit and its cultural and natural resources, connections with groups and areas external to the park, and language of the enabling legislation. Additional purposes may have emerged since this area was originally set aside. Purpose Statements may originate in the park's GMP, previous planning documents, from an Interpretive Planning Workshop or as in this case, from a park's Core Operations workshop.

The purpose of Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site is to:

- **Commemorate the historic role played by this trading post in the opening of the West.**
- **Develop, maintain, protect and preserve the historic site for visitors.**
- **Interpret the significance of the Santa Fe Trail and the impact it had on the U.S., Mexico and American Indian people.**

PARK LEGISLATIVE SIGNIFICANCE

The Park Legislative Significance statement clarifies and reveals key components of the original enabling legislation and subsequent pertinent legislation that defines and describes the Park unit and its purpose.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site was authorized for establishment by Act of Congress on June 3, 1960 (Public Law 86-487). The enabling legislation called for the site to "be set aside as a public national memorial to commemorate the historic role played by such fort in the opening of the West." The original site contained approximately 178 acres. In 1978, Public Law 95-625 subsequently added 620 acres to the site.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site is located along the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. The Act of May 8, 1987 (Public Law 100-35), established the Santa Fe National Historic Trail as part of the National Trails System. The act has bearing on Bent's Old Fort NHS because the site includes the route as well as archeological remnants associated with that trail.

PARK SIGNIFICANCE

Park Significance Statements describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of this park unit. These statements can reflect upon natural, cultural, scientific,

Significance statements describe the importance or distinctiveness of the resources of an area.

recreational, inspirational, and other resources. The statements embody the power of the place through a factual representation of what makes this place special. Usually stated as facts placed in relevant context, these statements summarize the essence of the importance of this park's resources to our natural and cultural heritage. Significances may evolve over time as a result of discoveries and updates to our knowledge about this place. Significance Statements may originate in the park's GMP, previous planning documents, or in this case from an Interpretive Planning Workshop.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site (BEOL) has national significance for the following reasons:

- **Bent's Old Fort NHS conserves the site and archeological evidence of what was once an economic and cultural crossroads; a meeting place for many cultures where peace was promoted as part of good trade practice.**
- **Bent's Old Fort NHS is a link to the past that allows all to explore the value of reconstruction, rehabilitation, preservation, and the use of reproductions based on original objects for living history interpretation.**
- **During their years of operation, Bent's Fort and the Santa Fe Trail solidified the commercial involvement of the southern plains region with the global economy of the Fur Trade and the Santa Fe trade into Mexico.**
- **The reconstruction of Bent's Old Fort NHS enables exploration of the importance of peoples, places, and events that had an impact on the fort's place in history.**
- **Bent's Old Fort NHS and the area encompassed within its boundaries provide a connection with historic ecosystems.**

PARK MISSION

The Mission Statement integrates the Statements of Purpose and Significance for the national historic site, describing the reason the park exists and the contribution it makes

toward understanding an important part of our nation's history. The statement below is from the park's current Strategic Plan. The mission goals below are generated from the park priorities identified in the site's Core Operations workshop.

The park mission **“first and foremost is to protect, preserve, research and maintain the resources, natural and cultural, of Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site in perpetuity. Secondly, park staff will provide for a safe, enjoyable, quality experience for visitors while interpreting the story of the fort's pivotal role in American commerce and expansion into the Southwest.”**

Mission Goals

- 1. Maintain the park in safe condition for staff and visitors through awareness, training, maintenance and safe behavior.**
- 2. Document, preserve, monitor and research the park's cultural sites and museum collection.**
- 3. Research, develop, provide and promote effective interpretation through living history, demonstrations, tours, and other interpretive services.**
- 4. Restore, protect and preserve the cultural landscape by controlling exotic and pest species; restoring plant communities; inventorying and monitoring plants and animals; and reintroducing fire as a tool to restore the short grass prairie.**

In terms of interpretation at the park, the mission can be further described based on national goals:

- The mission of interpretation is to increase visitor understanding and appreciation of the significance of park resources (from NPS Mission Goals and Park-Specific Goals IIb1).**
- Interpretive services provide opportunities for people to forge their own intellectual and emotional connections with the ideas and meanings inherent in the resources of the park (from the NPS Interpretive Development Program).**

PARK MISSION

Finally, the park superintendent has identified the following expectations for the site's interpretive operations:

- The park story must be engagingly told and presented.**
- Connect to visitors' experiences both intellectually and emotionally.**

- **Create the first spark - provocation**
- **Work with the Cooperating Association and Friends Group to help expand interpretive opportunities.**
- **Present natural and cultural resource education with a preservation message for visitors and staff.**
- **Incorporate safety into interpretive services, taking care to be mindful of all visitors' experiences.**
- **Address and incorporate the NPS mission into messages and connect the site to the overall park system.**

PARK PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Primary interpretive themes are those ideas and concepts that are key to helping visitors gain an understanding of the park's significance and resources. The themes, which are

based on the park's mission, purpose, and resource significance, provide the foundation for all interpretive media and programs in the park. The themes do not include everything that may be interpreted, but they do address those ideas that are critical to understanding

Primary themes should be few enough in number to provide focus for the interpretive program, but numerous enough to represent the full range of park significance.

and appreciating the park's importance. The majority of interpretive efforts (through both personal and non-personal services) should relate to one or more of the themes and each theme should be addressed by some part of the overall interpretive program. Effective interpretation is achieved when visitors are able to connect the concepts with the resources and derive something meaningful from their experience. Primary Interpretive Themes may originate in the park's GMP, previous planning documents, or in this case from an Interpretive Planning Workshop.

The following theme statements will provide the basis for interpretation at the park.

A) The history of Bent's Old Fort, encompassing the interaction among diverse cultures, including American Indian peoples, along the borderlands of Mexico and the United States, provides opportunities to explore ideas of security, sovereignty, and culture in the American West.

B) The reconstruction of Bent's Old Fort and the preservation of cultural attributes (original artifacts, historic records, recreated life-ways, and the historic landscape) enable a deeper understanding of the people, places, and events of the Fur Trade era of the American West.

C) The planning, construction, and successful operation of Bent's Old Fort was powerfully influenced by the geopolitical importance of its location along the Arkansas River within the short grass prairie ecosystem, illustrating the intimate connection between natural setting and human endeavor.

D) Bent's Old Fort, by virtue of its role in the Fur Trade and the Santa Fe Trade, was involved with international industries and early examples of multi-national commerce, which today continue to transform the lives of human beings around the world.

PARK PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Each primary theme may connect to a number of specific stories or subthemes. These elements are helpful in designing individual services, ensuring that the main aspects of primary themes are addressed. During the workshops, many subthemes were identified and these have been associated with each of the primary themes below.

A: The history of Bent's Old Fort, encompassing the interaction among diverse cultures, including American Indian peoples, along the borderlands of Mexico and the United States, provides opportunities to explore ideas of security, sovereignty, and culture in the American West.

Subthemes

- The increase in trade on the Southwest plains enabled unique human interaction and interdependency, which resulted in permanent political, cultural, and social change.
- Trade and self-interest brought diverse cultures together exemplifying the history of the American Southwest.
- Bent's Old Fort's location at a crossroads of cultures created the need for the various powers to interact, compromise and accommodate in order to trade in an otherwise violent land.
- The commercial relationships and economic dependencies developed by Bent, St. Vrain & Company helped pave the way for U.S. Westward expansion, which, while initially beneficial to both Mexican and American Indian peoples, ultimately resulted in loss of land and of traditional values and resources.
- The relationships established between tribes, families and Bent, St. Vrain & Company have survived to this day in genealogical, historical and emotional links to Cheyenne, Arapaho, Hispanic, European-American, and other peoples.

B: The reconstruction of Bent's Old Fort and the preservation of cultural attributes (original artifacts, historic records, recreated life-ways, and the historic landscape) enable a deeper understanding of the peoples, places, and events of the Fur Trade era of the American West.

Subthemes

- Bent's Old Fort NHS serves as a laboratory for the study and demonstration of the 19th century technologies and skills that were part of daily life at the fort.

PARK PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- The fort is an accurate reconstruction based upon archeological and documentary evidence that enables visitors to have a deeper understanding of the people, places, and events of the fur trade era of the American West

C: The planning, construction, and successful operation of Bent's Old Fort was powerfully influenced by the geopolitical importance of its location along the Arkansas River within the short grass prairie ecosystem, illustrating the intimate connection between natural setting and human endeavor.

Subthemes

- Both historic and modern building techniques at Bent's Old Fort NHS preserve a connection to the land by using timber, mud, straw, clay, sand and water.
- Components of the increasingly rare short-grass prairie ecosystem and the riparian zone along the Arkansas River provided the material needs for survival during the fort's operation and are still found within the park boundaries today.
- One of the attractions for the location for Bent's Old Fort was the Arkansas River, an historic boundary between nations and cultures.

D: Bent's Old Fort, by virtue of its role in the Fur Trade and the Santa Fe Trade, was involved with international industries and early examples of multi-national commerce, which today continue to transform the lives of human beings around the world.

Subthemes

- Through its location on the Santa Fe Trail and connected to El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, Bent's Old Fort was part of an international industry which resulted in great changes for people living along the borderlands that separated the United States and Mexico, particularly American Indians.
- The economic and personal benefits of trade attracted consumers from the Santa Fe Trail, Mexico and American Indian tribes to Bent's Old Fort.

PARK PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- The Fur Trade as illustrated by the operation of Bent's Old Fort, included the Skin Trade, the Robe Trade, and the Whiskey Trade, all of which had positive consequences for some people but negative consequences for natural resources and for other people in the West.
- At a time when most Americans only had access to goods produced in their local communities, Bent's Old Fort was part of an international trade network impacting lives around the world.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Visitor experience goals describe what physical, intellectual, sensory, and emotional experiences should be available for visitors. These experiences should be available to visitors of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with visual, auditory, mobility, or cognitive impairments.

These experience goals were developed by park staff and stakeholders during the interpretive

“Visitor experience” is what people do, sense, feel, think, and learn. It is affected by experiences prior to the visit and affects behavior after the visit. The ultimate goal of interpretation is for visitors to experience strong emotional and intellectual connections with the meanings represented in park resources and as a result become better stewards of these places, which characterize our national heritage.

workshops. One of the primary goals identified for the program is to have people understand that Bent's Fort was once the center of a bustling, active, thriving trade empire that stretched across much of the Southwest.

Visitors to Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site (BEOL) will have the opportunity to:

1. **Experience (or even immerse themselves in) an authentic approximation of the sights, sounds, smells and textures of Bent's Old Fort during the Fur Trade era.**
2. **Leave with the concept that it is valuable to preserve and interpret history from multiple points of view even if it is emotional, unpleasant, and controversial.**
3. **Understand the preservation mission of the National Park Service (stewardship) through various programs geared toward the mission of the NPS.**
4. **Make self-discoveries, by being able to walk through the fort, find something that stimulates their interest, then ask someone (employee or volunteer) about it.**
5. **Feel safe and be able to easily contact staff in urgent or emergency situations.**
6. **Learn more about the people that were at the fort and the site's history (including the post-Bent period) via park brochures/handouts.**

Additionally, park staff and stakeholders were provided a forum to offer observations and suggestions regarding the park's interpretive program. These are included below to contribute to the information base on which the park's desired future interpretive program is constructed and upon which some future actions might be based.

Don Troyer (BEOL seasonal interpreter): Park must make an effort to bring in more minorities and Native Americans. Lose the video.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Joann and Gale Casebolt (Park neighbors): Park must provide more information on fort events/happenings for local visitors. Park should promote and provide assistance for motion pictures to be filmed at the park. More site advertising.

Bob Larison (BEOL volunteer/Bent's Old Fort Historical Association board member): Park should teach living history and involve visitors; attract more volunteers; retain the current volunteers; allow overnight events, which can be a teaching tool.

Eva Jepson (WNPA Manager, BEOL): More artifacts should be on display; the sales outlet needs more sales items; more living history in various rooms. More

encampments, events and activities. How is the money used on living history. More publicity on local attractions/parks. Get park brochure sent out to local businesses.

Kathy Davis (BEOL volunteer): More money for interpretation. The river should be included in the park's interpretive programs. Plant ID should become a priority; also accessibility.

John Sweet (History Instructor): Park should liaison with higher learning. Have more overnight living history. The bookstore should be back in the Fort. Volunteer program is down; enable it, don't disable it. More partnerships should be explored with universities, AG groups/ tell the story of the people. Better communication between the park and volunteers. Give reasons for decisions. Be positive. Discuss decisions and why they were made.

Alexa Roberts (SAND Site Manager): Connect to stories of larger historical context, i.e. Sand Creek, Washita. Collect and record oral histories from Native Americans affiliated with the fort.

Laird Cometsevak (Cheyenne Representative/SAND): Interpret fort as a crossroads and gathering place. There is a story of tribal peace at the fort. Tell of Colonel Bent's union with Owl Woman. The fort is a place where the tribe learned monetary value. Have Pow Wows again at the fort. Advertise the gatherings if possible. Have parking and security; sell items from Native Americans. Tell the Cheyenne story. Provide some type of plant/resource usage for the Cheyenne.

John Luzader (BEOL volunteer/living history interpreter): Concerned with the quality of the interpretation and the history being presented. Potential is there to be a premiere site. Need more training for volunteers. Recognize the costumed interpreters, and train the interpretive staff also. Enable the volunteer program; reconnect with lost volunteers; improve communication between park and volunteers.

PARK USER AND AUDIENCE PROFILES

The majority of this profile and visitor information is based on staff observation and experience, rather than analytical assessment.

Bent's Old Fort NHS is enjoyed by a wide variety of visitors. Many who visit have little prior knowledge of the park or the events that occurred here. For them, this is not a primary destination. The average stay is approximately 1 to 2 hours.

Bent's Old Fort received approximately 27,760 visitors in 2005. From 1990 to 2005 highest visitation occurred in 1992 (48,609) and lowest in 2005 (27,760). The park has experienced a fairly steady downward trend in visitation since the early 90s (similar to

many historic sites in the West). The park's peak visitation occurs in May (due to school groups) and July and lowest visitation occurs in January and February.

Out-of-town visitors make up the great majority of park visitors. Most visitors come from Colorado or the surrounding states of Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Many senior citizens visit the park during the shoulder seasons, while family groups dominate the summer months. Park special events attract more local constituents, although recently many event attendees are coming from the Front Range metropolitan areas of Colorado Springs and Denver.

The following is a list of visitor activities in 2005:

- 17,678 - Watched the park orientation film "Castle on the Plains."
- 4,596 - Went on School Group tours
- 2,425 - Attended Special Events
- 6,197 - Went on Guided Tours
- 9,089 - Observed a Living History Demonstration
- 18,676 - Were contacted through Informal Interpretation (Roving)

The last Visitor Services Project formal survey completed at the park was over a dozen years ago (1992). Though dated, some of the information would seem to still apply. The survey found 78% were first-time visitors to the fort. 77% were in family groups and 80% spent one to two hours visiting the site. 60% of visitors were from Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma or Texas. 3% of visitors were from foreign countries. Since that time (post 9-11) foreign visitation seems to have decreased to even smaller numbers. The number of visitors from Colorado, which was 35% in that survey, has seen an increase. A more updated Visitor Services Project survey is recommended to get a clearer picture of today's visitors.

During the workshop phase, several interpretive audiences were identified. For the purpose of this plan, and due to the very small numbers in some of these groups, the following three groups are identified as the park's interpretive audiences.

PARK USER AND AUDIENCE PROFILES

1: General Audience.

Includes local residents, scouting and youth groups, affiliated American Indians, and non-English speakers and readers (primarily Spanish, German, and French languages).

2: Organized School Groups, Curriculum Based.

Includes grades K-12, home-schooled students, and college students.

3: Living History Interpreters.

Living History Interpretive Volunteers have played an important role in interpretive programs at the fort since the late 1970s. Large numbers of visitors have learned about Bent, St. Vrain & Company and the history of the Fur Trade from these talented and highly motivated interpreters.

The park has a large number of volunteers who participate in many ways with interpretive programs and presentations. Since these individuals and groups are an important part of the park's interpretive program, the park has identified specific training needs and has established specific training programs.

The key to ensuring that this aspect of the interpretive program continues to be valuable to park visitors is providing these volunteer interpreters with appropriate training opportunities in history and interpretive skills and feedback on their performance. Some specific recommendations are presented later in this plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

The following is a summary of visitor experiences and conditions as they existed at the onset of this plan's preparation.

PREVISIT AND ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Information about Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site is available by mail, phone, and on the park's web site. No analysis has been done regarding website effectiveness.

Information is also in several guidebooks like AAA and other Colorado, Santa Fe Trail and historic guidebooks.

Brown and white signs direct visitors to the park off of U.S. Highway 50 and onto Colorado Highway 194 from the west at La Junta and from the east near Las Animas. Once off of Highway 50, regular green directional signs point visitors towards “Bent’s Fort.” There are no signs on any of the other highways that intersect Highway 50 in the region, including U.S. Highway 350, Colorado Highway 10 or Interstate 25.

As visitors approach the site on Colorado 194, large entrance signs mark the boundaries of the park. The main visitor entrance is located about halfway between these two signs. Recently placed signs now direct visitors away from the park’s service and employee entrance toward the visitor entrance. These have proved effective in helping visitors locate the main entrance.

Park brochures and rack cards are distributed to the Colorado Welcome Centers around the state. The centers at Lamar and Trinidad are particularly effective at making visitors aware of the site. Locally, the La Junta Chamber of Commerce receives brochures and rack cards as well, but is not really identified to visitors as an information center. In fact there is no information center as such in either La Junta or Las Animas to direct visitors to the site.

For school groups coming to visit the fort, confirmation letters with visit information are sent prior to the scheduled trip. A traveling trunk about the Santa Fe Trail is available for loan (although since there is only one trunk, very few schools take advantage of this). No pre-visit activities have been developed for school groups. Lack of staff also makes pre-visits by park interpreters virtually impossible at this time.

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

VISITOR PARKING LOT

When the visitor arrives at Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site, they drive into a parking area located about ¼ mile north of the fort itself. Currently, this parking lot has visitor restrooms, one bulletin board, a phone to call for a shuttle ride, and the trailhead for the walkway to the fort. There is no physical NPS presence at the parking lot. The bulletin board lists particulars about visiting the site, including hours, tours, fees, events, and the availability of a shuttle for those needing a ride to the fort. A funded project to

build a fee kiosk (to be staffed seasonally) and an interpretive plaza (to provide basic orientation and introduction to the park's main interpretive themes) is just getting underway. Completion is scheduled for late summer 2007.

TRAIL TO THE FORT

From the visitor parking lot, a ¼ mile paved path leads to the fort itself. The path travels along a bench between short grass prairie to the west and a marsh area to the east. At the head of this path, there is a bronze plaque commemorating the legacy of Stephen Mather, as is seen at many other NPS units. Approximately ¾ of the way to the fort a large ash tree shades a bench hewn from a large log. Just beyond the tree is the post cemetery that includes the gravestone of Edward Dorris and a small metal interpretive plaque about the Dorris grave. Two additional burials are marked in the far corner of the cemetery by stones set in the ground. These are Native American remains found during archeological work at the fort and reinterred during the 1990s. Few visitors notice these graves as they are at the far corner of the cemetery away from the trail.

As visitors approach the front entrance of the fort, a large woodpile is to their right (firewood for the fort fireplaces). Seasonally, a tipi and the fort's reproduction freight wagon are staged to the left. No interpretive signs identify or explain these – but they help set the stage and are much photographed by visitors.

TOURING THE FORT

As visitors enter the fort through the main gate or zaguan, they are greeted by a park interpreter in period dress who welcomes them and gives them a very brief orientation. Visitors are then brought into the exhibit room, located two doors to the left of the entrance to pay the entrance fee or present a park pass as the case may be. Here further orientation is given, a self-guided tour booklet is offered, and the visitor is advised of the park's audiovisual presentation available in the adjoining room. The room where the fees are collected does contain the only interpretive exhibit area in the fort per se (the fort and the furnished rooms themselves are really exhibits as a whole). This exhibit discusses the

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

Bent Trading Empire and the three main areas of trade – the Indian trade, the Mountain Man trade and the Santa Fe trade. Reproduction items representing these areas are located in closed Plexiglas display cases below the panels.

Audiovisual Program

A 20-minute orientation video, "Castle on the Plains" is shown in a small room in the northeast corner of the fort. The film covers the history of the fort up to the point of its

abandonment by William Bent in 1849. The video is shown on a television monitor hooked to a laser disc player. The room comfortable seats about 15 visitors, although additional chairs may be set up for showing to just over 20 at one time. The current film was produced in 1976 and is now quite dated. The film, as shown, is an edited version of a longer production and the missing pieces can make for a choppy effect. A new film is currently under production. This is also a 20-minute production, but interprets the fort story beyond abandonment to the 1975-76 reconstruction. This will film will be on DVD. It should premiere in late 2006.

Fort Rooms

Touring the fort rooms themselves can either be done on a self-guided or guided tour. The guided tours offered 2 or 4 times per day (depending on season) do not enter all the rooms of the fort. Most visitors self guide through the fort. Even those that take a guided tour usually go back to explore further and visit those rooms not seen on the guided tour.

The self-guided tour booklet was developed in 2002 and became available to visitors in 2003. It has proved very popular and has been reprinted twice since then. Visitors are asked to place \$1 in the park's donation box in the zaguan to cover the cost of the guide. Donation funds are then used to reprint the booklet as needed (current cost is about \$0.60 per copy). The guide describes most of the rooms of the fort, including photos and text, on the functions of the rooms and information on some of the fort inhabitants. In 2003, the guidebook was awarded first place in the National Association for Interpretation Media Awards competition for interpretive guides.

The fort rooms themselves are the park's main interpretive exhibits. Visitors are free to walk through most rooms of the fort. A few are barricaded off due to the presence of antiques or high cost reproductions (William Bent's quarters, the Clerk's quarters, Susan Magoffin's room, and the Fur Warehouse). Rooms are furnished as they may have been during the fort's occupation in the 1840s. By browsing through the rooms and exploring the fort, visitors get a sense of discovery, while also absorbing the look and feel of the 1840s. The items on display in the rooms give visitors some idea of the fort's operation

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

and inhabitants, but there is no specific interpretive information presented in the rooms in the form of written panels or audio components. This allows the fort to maintain an 1840s appearance.

A Fort Furnishing Plan developed in 1998 guides the furnishings in the room and the acquisition of additional pieces, which are added over time as research and funding allow.

In 2006, the park completed remodeling work on the back portion of the fort, in what would have originally been the wagon sheds. In September 2006, the park moved an historic Santa Fe Trail freight wagon back into this area. The wagon had been stored on loan at Fort Larned National Historic Site in Kansas for nearly twenty years. A small freestanding interpretive sign tells visitors about the wagon.

Bookstore

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) operates a bookstore and trade store adjacent to the wagon display space in the wagon shed area at the back of the fort. WNPA moved into this new space in spring 2006. Besides the usual books and videos, the store features a reproduction of the trade counter space in the fort itself. This trade area displays sales items reflective of the items traded at the fort in the 1840s such as metal pots, fire steels, blankets, beads, knives, etc.

Since the store is located at the back of the fort, there was some concern that visitors might not find it and sales might decrease (the store had previously been located in the fort proper in rooms adjacent to the zaguan, and then in a temporary trailer at the visitor parking lot while the fort was undergoing renovations). This has not proven to be the case, as bookstore sales have increase substantially (upwards of 30%) since the move to the wagon shed space, despite a 9% decrease in visitation over the same time period. Some small signs point the direction to the store from the side corral and the wagon alley. It seems very few visitors do not run across the store on their explorations of the fort.

PERSONAL SERVICES

Interpretive programs are offered to the public on a daily basis. Most are guided tours, offered 4 times daily during the summer months (June-August), and twice daily during the off-season (September – May). Demonstrations are sometimes incorporated into these guided tours, at other times demonstrations are presented as stand-alone or ongoing activities. These demonstrations include blacksmithing, carpentry, cooking, fire starting, mule packing, trade scenes, adobe making, washing and cleaning, sewing and other 19th

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

century skills. The fort is most active during the summer weekends when staffing allows more ongoing activity. During the week and in the off season, staff are most occupied with staffing the zaguan orienting visitors and collecting fees, along with doing the scheduled guided tours.

Throughout the year, school groups and other organizations bring groups to the fort and are given the opportunity to have an interpretive program. These programs vary depending on the group, time required and staff availability.

Roving / Informal Interpretation takes place through out the fort during the times park interpreters are not staffing the zaguan or presenting a guided tour or demonstration.

Children may complete a Junior Ranger program and receive a badge. The booklet currently being used was designed for another purpose and with different display conditions in some of the rooms. Therefore, it requires the removal of some activities and the explanation of others. There is a new Junior Ranger program currently under development under the auspices of Western National Parks Association. WNPA will in the future provide the Junior Ranger booklets and badges at no cost to the park. The first draft of the Junior Ranger booklet was received in late September 2006. Full implementation is expected in 2007.

An additional off-site program is the park's Trails and Rails program aboard Amtrak's *Southwest Chief*. Interpreters ride the train between La Junta, CO and Albuquerque, NM twice each week between early May and Labor Day presenting narration and interpretive information. This program conducted almost exclusively by volunteers with the park providing oversight and management of the program. During the 2006 season, over 15,000 passengers were contacted through this program, which brings the National Park Service message to many who may never visit any parks in the region.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Approximately 4,000 school students visit Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site each year, mostly 4th graders, since that is when Colorado schools study state history. Several student groups also come from Kansas and New Mexico. The park has not really developed a true curriculum-based program. The tours and demonstrations provided to the students do fit into the curriculum for Colorado schools through Colorado history, but efforts have not really been made to cross into any other area such as science, math or language arts. Few schools do any pre-visit or post-visit activities associated with their visit to the fort, beyond what little reading is found in the history textbooks. On the other hand, some schools do arrive with their own study guides or activity sheets for their visit.

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

Typical school visits include a guided tour of the fort, which might include a demonstration of blacksmithing, cooking or fire starting.

One traveling trunk is available for schools to check out. This trunk centers on the story of the Santa Fe Trail. It includes a Santa Fe Trail game, books, video, and hands-on items related to the trail story. Since only one trunk is available it only makes it to about a dozen schools each year.

Due to limited staffing, the park is generally unable to send rangers to do off-site school programs. Usually only a couple of these programs are done each year.

The park worked with the Intermountain Region's Teacher-to-Ranger-to-Teacher (TRT) program in 2005 to place a teacher from Las Animas in the park for the summer. This teacher was able to bring some programs back to the classroom, but did not develop any specific curriculum-based, pre- or post-visit activities for the park or further tie the on-site programs into the Colorado curriculum. The park was unsuccessful in getting at TRT participant in 2006, but is looking to continue the program in future years.

TRAIL SYSTEM

The historic site's only current developed trail is the paved ¼ mile walkway leading from the visitor parking lot to the fort. There is an unofficial trail from the back of the fort leading down to the cottonwood grove along the Arkansas River. This consists of a two-track dirt road which is used mainly for special event and natural resource access. A grant obtained from the Colorado Historical Fund through Colorado Preservation, Inc. was approved in 2006 to create a trail from the fort through the cottonwood grove and around the wetland back to the visitor parking lot. This trail would include 7 interpretive panels outlining the connection between the natural resources and the human history of the area. Completion would be in 2008.

MUSEUM COLLECTION AND LIBRARY

Bent's Old Fort NHS a museum collection of over 200,000 objects as well as archival materials. Most of this material is stored in a Bally building on site. This is not meant to be a permanent location. Plans are for a multi-park museum storage building to be constructed at Bent's Old Fort. That new building would include a small public area for researchers and other members of the public to view artifacts or archives. In the meantime, the collection is not generally accessible to the public. Thus, the "real" historic pieces of Bent's Fort are unseen.

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

The park library is located in the Administration Building located about ½ mile from the fort itself near Highway 194. It contains approximately 2,000 books dealing principally with the Fur Trade era and the Santa Fe Trail. The library is open to researchers on a case-by-case basis. The location of the library, at a distance from the fort, makes it difficult for interpreters to consult texts when needed for research or to more immediately answer visitor questions.

An Historic Resource Study of the site's history was completed in 2004 by historian Mark Gardner under contract with the NPS.

PARK PARTNERS

- Western National Parks Association (Cooperating Association)
- Bent's Old Fort Historical Association (Friends Group)
- Santa Fe Trail Association
- Las Animas School District (Teacher-to-Ranger-to-Teacher program)
- Amtrak (Trails and Rails program)
- Colleges and Universities (STEP/SCEP programs, Place and Native Voice)
- Stephen F. Austin University (interpretive panels for orientation plaza)
- La Junta Tribune-Democrat (park provides weekly submission for insert)
- Interpretive Volunteers

CURRENT STAFFING

As of FY 2006 the Interpretive Division consists of one permanent GS-0025-11 Chief of Interpretation, one permanent GS-0025-09 Park Ranger, and GS-0025/GS-0090 seasonal park rangers and guides. Currently, one full-time and one part-time seasonal work over the winter months, while six full-time seasonal employees are hired for the summer months. Two seasonals work in the shoulder seasons in the spring and fall. The interpretive staff performs a variety of duties including: fee collection, working the zaguan orienting visitors, providing shuttle cart rides, and conducting interpretive programs for visitors, school groups and tour groups. NPS staff also cover lunches or

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

otherwise assist with the WNPA sales area on a limited basis. As of this writing WNPA has one full time and one part time employee, enabling them to staff the bookstore on a daily basis, freeing the NPS staff from those duties.

OPERATING HOURS

The park is open 362 days per year. It is closed on Thanksgiving, December 25 and January 1. From September through May operating hours are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with

guided tours offered at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. From June through August, the park is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with guided tours at 9:30 and 11 a.m. and 1 and 2:30 p.m.

INTERPRETIVE PUBLICATIONS

Site Bulletins

- Reconstructing the Castle on the Plains
- Historic Plants
- Livestock
- Bien Venidos (Spanish Language brochure)
- The Families of William and Charles Bent
- Languages of the Trade
- Indian Trade Goods
- Junior Ranger pamphlet

Booklets

- Self-guiding fort tour booklet

Major Sales Publications (relating directly to the site)

- Bent's Old Fort by Mark Gardner (16 page WNPA booklet)
- Bent's Old Fort bird checklist (under development 2006)
- Bent's Fort by David Lavender
- Bent's Old Fort by the Colorado Historical Society
- Reconstructing the Castle on the Plains by Emil Gimeno
- Bent's Fort: Crossroads of Culture by Melvin Bacon and Daniel Blegen
- Ritual Ground by Douglas C. Comer

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

The park's interpretation operation is subject to internal and external constraints that impact its ability to accomplish the goal of enhancing public understanding and appreciation of park significance. A review of those issues and influences currently affecting or expected to affect interpretation during the life of this plan allows the staff to predict and proactively address challenges to effective interpretation. During the workshops and planning process, the following issues and influences were identified.

Several issues identified at the beginning of the planning process have already been dealt with such as the separation of park headquarters (when it was located temporarily in La Junta), the bookstore location (when it was in a temporary trailer), no overnight stays at the fort (since allowed again) and the need for a new film (currently nearing completion).

Use of fort and artifacts. Bent's Old Fort NHS finds itself on the horns of a difficult dilemma. The fact that the National Park Service is the nation's primary preservation agency means that its cultural resource managers are trained to protect and preserve original artifacts and structures. Bent's Old Fort is a reconstructed resource, but its prescription calls for it to be treated as an historic structure. The situation can be even more confusing when it comes to managing a combination of original and replica artifacts in a replica fort. Clarity can be brought to this issue by revisiting the park mission statement to include the importance of using the reconstructed nature of the fort to enhance and enrich the visitor experience. The opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in history and experience it at close range adds substantially to the visitor experience and can add clarity to their appreciation of the history of the Fur Trade period.

Inadequate staffing. Currently the Interpretive Division is very short staffed. It is impossible for one permanent front-line interpreter to serve visitors needs while carrying out all the other duties associated with operations such as cleaning of furnishings, management of volunteers, fee collection, education program administration, etc. The Chief has to assist with day-to-day operations as well as manage the park's seasonal Trails and Rails program. Another full-time permanent interpreter is needed to manage the education and/or volunteer programs and assist in the front-line interpretation of the site. Also, more seasonal interpreters are needed to fulfill the park's desired interpretive program during the busier months. OFS requests have been submitted for both of these needs. The need for more costumed interpreters presenting demonstrations was the most identified personal services issue raised by visitors in the 1992 visitor survey.

Diversity issues and recruitment. The park needs to develop closer ties to diverse populations including the Native American and Hispanic communities. These

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

groups were essential participants in the story of the Fort and are equally essential in telling that story today. Steps should be taken to recruit from these populations, and fort events should be, at least inclusive, if not targeted to these groups. An example would be a Native American Pow Wow at the site or an Hispanic celebration.

Interpretive budget/funding/fees. Changing park priorities and functions have greatly influenced the interpretive budget. For instance, in FY2004 Interpretation

received funding of approximately \$186,700. This compares with FY1994, when Interpretation was funded at approximately \$201,700. This budget reduction has led to a commensurate reduction in staffing for interpretation. In addition, park ONPS funding continues to lag behind salary increases, meaning more and more of this funding goes to non-discretionary personnel costs. Over the past few years, the park, and the Interpretive Division in particular have survived on lapse money from vacant positions. With all positions filled, that money has disappeared and seasonal positions have been cut, leading to a further decrease in visitor services. If priorities are not rearranged, alternative funding sources need to be mined to assist the funding of the interpretive program. Also, it is vital that the park's living history fee be retained and collected in order to fund seasonal help. Conversion to a regular entrance fee under the new fee legislation would call for the park to increase its fee (to \$5 per visitor) for adults while allowing those under 16 in free. This would remove all the money school groups bring in to the coffers. Ultimately, under an entrance fee it appears the dollars available to support interpretation would not increase much, if at all, while visitation might decrease due to the increased cost of entrance. At a time of already decreasing visitation, the park would not want to depress visitation even further.

Livestock. At this point the park appears to be at its limit or even beyond in terms of livestock. Even the animals the fort has today are too numerous for the existing staff to care for and use properly. There are also issues with safety since no safety program or training program adequately addresses livestock use. The park needs to come to terms with its livestock issues through the development of a livestock plan and a program that is designed to care for and use an appropriate number of animals. This plan would need to be developed in consultation with all park divisions.

Orientation of incoming visitors. With the removal of the temporary trailer at the visitor parking lot, the park's point of contact with incoming visitors to the site has been lost. A project has been funded to build an interpretive/orientation plaza at the visitor parking lot to include a small fee collection facility that would be staffed seasonally. Still during much of the year the first contact between visitors

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

and park personnel would not take place until they arrive at the fort itself. This situation is certainly not ideal for visitor safety, orientation or resource protection. This plaza and kiosk still should be considered a temporary fix until such time as the park is able to build a visitor center in this location as is called for in the park's General Management Plan.

Education program development. The park does not currently have a fully developed curriculum based education program. Funding has been requested

through the “Parks As Classrooms” program to develop a program for the park targeted to 4th grade with accompanying pre- and post-visit activities. Also, an OFS request has been submitted for a permanent Education Specialist position that would coordinate and manage the park’s education programs. Currently, this falls to the one front-line permanent interpreter (already busy with many other duties) and the seasonal staff.

Computer/technical support/web presence. With the explosion of activities and resources on the web, the park needs to continue to upgrade its website and provide more information and activities via this important communication forum. This requires hardware and software upgrades and technical expertise to stay current and provide a good web experience for the park’s “virtual” visitors. These efforts will also tie in closely to the park’s education program and interpretation of natural resources.

Public relations plan. The park would benefit from having a public relations plan to cultivate better relationships with local communities and institutions. Such a plan should especially address methods for generating better publicity for the site and for site events locally, regionally and nationally. The nonpersonal interpretive issue most identified by visitors in the 1992 study was a lack of publicity for the site.

Volunteer issues. The fort is very reliant (and indebted) to a dedicated volunteer cadre to put on special events at the site. The annual Encampment and the Holiday Celebration could not take place without this volunteer assistance. Funds to support volunteers and the time to manage our volunteer program continue to be in very short supply. Also, many of these volunteers come from out of the area and are not available on a regular basis to assist in day-to-day operations at the fort. There is also no infrastructure in place (housing, RV pads, etc.) to house volunteers in the vicinity of the fort for longer periods of time. Many volunteers would also like more extensive training opportunities in order to help hone their skills. Due to funding, staffing and accommodation constraints, this training has not been readily available. Additional assistance is necessary to adequately address volunteer

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

training, recruitment, development and retention. Communication with volunteers has improved through efforts of current management and the quarterly publication of a fort newsletter.

Natural resource interpretation. The park’s interpretive program to this point has focused principally on the cultural resources of the site. With the continued development of the site’s natural resource program and restoration of the native short-grass prairie, the interpretive program needs to connect more strongly to

natural resource issues. Ultimately, the two stories are integrally tied together and need to be interpreted as such. Site bulletins, wayside exhibits and interpretive programs can all be part of making this happen. Since the beginning of the planning process, the park has produced a site bulletin on the historic plants of the park. Also, the interpretive trail funded through the Colorado Historical Fund will go along way to addressing this issue allowing access to and interpretation of the prairie, the wetlands and the river bottom community that should facilitate these connections.

Collaborating with other sites. The park needs to develop on-going working relationships with other NPS sites interpreting the Fur Trade and the Santa Fe Trail. Sharing of resources and joint training could benefit all parties involved. The park also needs to continue to cultivate and develop relationships with nearby historic sites such as Boggsville, an historic property outside of Las Animas being developed by the Colorado and Bent County Historical Societies and the El Pueblo Museum in Pueblo, managed by the Colorado Historical Society.

Working with other divisions. Cross training opportunities would be helpful to facilitate relationships and understanding among park employees. Such cross training would also allow for assistance across division lines as needed. For instance, employees from other divisions would be able to assist with the front-line interpretive operation on an emergency basis, while conversely, interpretive staff would be able to assist with maintenance, curatorial, natural resource or other functions in a reciprocal fashion.

Road Access. The Federal Highway Administration is now in the planning stages for a new road connecting U.S. Highway 50 and Colorado Highway 194 along the Otero-Bent County line, approximately 1½ miles east of the fort. If and when completed, this road will greatly improve access to the park from U.S. Highway 50, the main east-west travel route in this part of the state. Instead of having to travel either 8 or 13 miles from Highway 50; the Fort will now be little more than 2 miles away. Figures developed during the planning stages of this project indicate a possible 25% increase in visitation to the park as a result of this new road. Such an

EXISTING CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

increase, while providing wonderful opportunities for interpreting to a greater audience, will also stretch a thin interpretive staff even further.

Visitor Center. To adequately orient visitors, interpret the story of the site and display the park's extensive museum collection, the site needs a visitor center. This vital component of the interpretive program was identified in the park's GMP over ten years ago, but site limitations and funding constraints have precluded the construction of a center. Project statements have been submitted for Fee Demo and

Line Item construction money for a visitor center, but as of now those funds will not be available in the foreseeable future.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Interpretive planning assesses current conditions and formulates recommendations that will provide direction and focus to achieve the

desired Future Interpretive Program. The discussion of each program or media proposal identifies its place within the overall strategy and sometimes will suggest specific theme / location pairings to facilitate a desired interpretive outcome. These suggestions should provide a framework for the park's strategic vision, but should not limit the creativity and scope so essential when planning specific programs and media. A complete listing of

The ultimate goal of all recommendations is to support management's strategies and to provide visitors opportunities to connect with the meanings inherent in this park's resources.

Interpretive Activity / Location recommendations that were generated is included in the Appendix. This listing contains both long-term and short-term recommendations and may be very helpful when preparing the Annual Implementation Plan and related funding requests.

A primary challenge for interpreters at Bent's Old Fort is to help visitors visualize, understand, and appreciate the importance of a site that is now well off the beaten path. During the time of its historic importance, Bent's Fort was known to all those who tread the West. Additionally, the interpreters must convey the sense of a bustling, operating place of business where today there is a reconstructed, mostly refurnished, but only slightly staffed, trading post. Despite the controversy of a building a reproduction on top of the fort's original remains (an action that would most likely never occur today), it is fortunate that the current post allows visitors to gain much better appreciation of the story of the fort, its inhabitants, and its place in the history of the Southwest.

The traditional visitor experience at Bent's Fort begins with their arrival in the visitor parking lot where they disembark from their vehicles and begin a walk back in time. As visitors travel the ¼ mile path to the fort they gain a brief taste of the wide open prairie and whatever weather conditions might prevail (be it the broiling heat of summer, the biting cold of winter, or something in between). The arrival at the fort then provides a sense of relief and excitement much as it did to those who arrived at the fort via the Santa Fe Trail in the 1830s or 1840s. At the entrance gate of the fort (the zaguan), visitors are greeted by an interpreter in period dress who provides orientation and collects the park fee. Many then view the park's orientation film, before going on a guided or self-guided tour of the fort. At some point during their stay, they come upon the wagon shed and bookstore at the back of the fort. Occasionally a visitor will walk down the dirt track to the cottonwood grove and the Arkansas River. Upon leaving the fort, visitors return up the path to their vehicles and their high speed travels.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Pre-Visit Orientation, Information, and Way finding

General and trip planning information regarding Bent's Old Fort will continue to be provided by traditional means such as regular mail, phone requests and questions, and e-mail. All mailed information includes the park's web site address, so that visitors may easily access more in-depth information. Good pre-trip information may lead to more in-depth visits by school groups and the general public. Adequate clear information and signage should be provided at some distance from the park so that potential visitors are

given the tools and motivations with which to make a decision as to whether to visit the site.

Recommendations:

- Provide short training session annually for all employees on park information, events, and informal visitor contacts. Keep staff apprised of upcoming events and schedules of activities, as well as interpretive offerings. Park staff should understand the value in providing excellent visitor services.
- Maintain affiliation and communication with Colorado Welcome Centers. Expand orientation /information training to include staff from partners' sites, related tourist contact points, and personnel from local tourist accommodations.
- Assure that up-to-date orientation information is available at partner sites and related tourist contact points, including regional web pages such as exploresoutheastcolorado.com and santafescenicbyway.org.
- If the city of La Junta develops a Visitor Information Center, work with the city to ensure the integration of Bent's Old Fort and what it has to offer into that center. Investigate the possibility of placing a Bent's Old Fort board on the Welcome to La Junta signs at either end of town.
- Work to improve way finding signs that direct visitors to the site. These signs should not only provide direction, but should promote agency identity in this region of the country. For example, replace generic green signs with brown and white signs with NPS logos. They should be of a consistent design which would develop more "brand identity" for the park. Also work with Colorado Department of Transportation to locate signs on highways that feed into U.S. Highway 50 (US 350, CO 10 and I25).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Expand the depth of information on the park's internet site. This is an excellent venue to whet the appetite of the potential park visitor, while providing solid way finding information. Overviews of safety and hazards are critical as well. Place the virtual tour of the fort rooms into the new NPS web system. Place Quick Time presentations of current power point programs on the Santa Fe Trail and the War with Mexico onto the site. Install a webcam overlooking the fort plaza to allow potential (or former)

visitors to view current conditions. Develop links to other similarly themed NPS units and organizations.

- Review printed and electronic tourism literature promoting Bent's Old Fort NHS to assure that it is accurate, appropriate, and up to date. Work on site bulletins in other foreign languages, German first, then French.
- Develop orientation/ informational literature and displays for regional transportation hubs such as the Colorado Springs and Denver airports, bus and train stations in concert with other area NPS units. These might outline the "National Parks of Southern Colorado (Great Sand Dunes NP, Florissant Fossil Beds NM, Bent's Old Fort NHS and Sand Creek Massacre NHS). Displays may include rack cards, portable or permanent exhibits, "table tent" displays, placemats, and cardboard cut-out rangers crafted to dispense literature.

Onsite Arrival and Orientation (Visitor Parking Lot)

Large entrance signs at the east and west boundaries of the park welcome visitors arriving on Colorado Highway 194. The main entrance off the highway delivers visitors to a parking area where restrooms, a bulletin board, a phone to call for a shuttle ride, and the trailhead to the fort are located. The lot and associated facilities are screened from the fort via a berm. Presently there is no NPS staff presence at this area.

Recommendations:

- Complete funded project for Interpretive Plaza and Fee Kiosk to ensure effective orientation of visitors to the site and the park story. Current plans call for a shade structure with 6 panels providing orientation and introducing the site's main interpretive themes. Also, a fee kiosk will be built with an automated fee station. This kiosk would be staffed during the summer months. A bulletin board posted on the side of the kiosk would provide changing information on park events and conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Continue to provide electric cart shuttle rides from the visitor parking lot to the fort for those unable to make the walk. The carts are quiet, non-polluting and are very transitory in impinging on the historic scene at the fort.
- Design trailhead to ensure that visitors are directed to information, fee kiosk and interpretive shelter. This may be accomplished through signage

or perhaps more effectively through fencing or other directive devices that cause visitors to route onto the trail to the fort via the orientation/fee facility. Maintain screening of the parking lot and trailhead facilities from the fort view shed via the existing or an expanded berm as necessary.

Trail to the Fort

A ¼ mile paved walkway leads from the visitor parking lot to the fort proper. A Mather plaque marks the beginning of the trail. The only interpretive marker along this path is one at the post cemetery explaining the gravestone of Edward Dorris.

Recommendations:

- The trail to the fort serves the importance purpose of isolating the historic scene at the fort, and providing visitors with a small taste of the experience of arriving at the post during the 1830s or 1840s. As such, no interpretive waysides should be placed along the trail, other than right at the trailhead, in order to preserve this elemental experience.
- Remove the Stephen Mather plaque currently located at the trailhead and move it to the front of the park's Administration Building. Currently, this plaque does nothing to help interpret the park. While it does associate the site with the National Park Service, it's placement serves no other purpose at this location except to divert visitors attention from their visit to the fort.
- An interpretive panel should be placed at the trailhead (at the location of the current Mather plaque) to set the scene for the visitors walk to the fort. The panel would help explain the reason for the distance from the parking lot to the fort and encourage visitors to imagine their trip to the fort under 19th century conditions.
- Place information regarding the post cemetery on this introductory panel as a sidebar (re: the Dorris and other graves) and remove the metal panel

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

at the cemetery itself in order to maintain the lack of modern intrusions on the trail to the fort.

TOURING THE FORT

Zaguan

As visitors pass through the main entrance gate of the fort (the zaguan), they first encounter NPS personnel. This is most likely in the form of a park interpreter in period dress, although at times uniformed NPS personnel staff the zaguan. At this point visitors are oriented to the fort story, the fee is collected (or pass presented), safety information is presented and visitors are provided with information for touring the fort. The zaguan also holds the shuttle phone which connects to the phone at the visitor parking lot. When visitors enter the zaguan without a staff member present, they flounder, unsure of how to proceed with their tour of the fort.

Recommendations:

- This is a **critical** point for the park's interpretive program. This is the first opportunity for visitors to come in contact with a park interpreter. Even with the completion of the interpretive plaza and kiosk at the visitor parking lot, during the majority of the year there will be no NPS personnel stationed there. This first point of personal contact must be maintained to provide necessary information and orientation. Due to the desire to keep the fort itself and the fort approach free of modern intrusions as much as possible there should be no more nonpersonal services (signs, panels, etc.) than are currently present in this area.
- Besides the basic visitor orientation functions, staffing at this location also should be maintained as a point of contact for those touring the fort and needing assistance. Due to the nature of the fort, it can be difficult for visitors to find a staff member whom might be in a room and not visible. A staff member at the zaguan provides a visible point of contact for those touring the fort; via their presence provides some level of security for fort furnishings, and finally can observe the fort for safety issues (running, playing on the upper level, throwing stones, etc).
- The park should explore the use of a visitor counter at the trailhead that would activate a buzzer in the interpretive offices at the back of the fort. During the off season (especially during the quiet winter months of December, January and February) this would allow park interpreters to

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

work in the back offices on research and other projects when there are no visitors present, but still be available at the zaguan when visitors arrive there from the parking lot. Alternatively, this counter could be located at the zaguan itself, but in this case, visitors would have already entered the fort before fort staff became aware of their presence. The visitors will flounder unsure of what to do, until a park staff member comes out to contact them.

Audiovisual Program

The park's current 30-year old audiovisual program is scheduled for replacement in late 2006 with a new 20-minute orientation film. The film is shown in small room adjacent to the exhibit/fee collection room. This room seats about 15-20 visitors. It has a small heating unit to provide some warmth in the winter. It has no air conditioning to cool the room in the summer. The current film is shown on a TV monitor via laser disc. The new film will be in high resolution on DVD. Both films offer captioned versions for the hearing impaired.

Recommendations:

- When the new film is ready to be shown, the park will need to replace the current laser disc system with a DVD system. At the same time it is recommended to change out the television monitor with a newer, larger high definition television. This will match the viewing platform to the technology of the film itself. The park's Friends Group has already indicated their willingness to fund this upgrade.
- In the long term the park should explore the possibility of a new location for the showing of the orientation video. The current room is small, not effectively climate controlled and, being in the fort proper, impinges (particularly in audio terms) onto the historic scene. Ideally, the video would be shown in a park visitor center located at the visitor parking lot as indicated in the site's General Management Plan. That is not likely during the lifespan of this plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Fort Rooms

Visitors at present tour the fort rooms either on a guided tour with a park interpreter, or more usually on a self-guided basis. A self-guiding tour booklet, developed in 2001 and made available in 2002, details most of the rooms of the fort. Although fort rooms are furnished, there is no written or audio interpretive material presented in the rooms. This maintains the 1840s appearance of the rooms.

Recommendations:

- The park should maintain the 1840s appearance of the rooms. This presents the visitors with a real sense of history as they tour the fort. Any modern interpretive media in the rooms would detract from the current visitor experience. Additionally, this type of media would be inappropriate during any of the first person living history events or demonstrations staged by the park. Current interpretive efforts of guided or self-guided tours should continue.
- While cell phone or GPS technology offer possibilities for interpretation at some sites, these devices currently don't tend to work well within the thick adobe walls of the fort. Podcasts downloadable to Ipod or similar devices have also been discussed for interpreting the fort. Though these may offer possibilities for providing more interpretive material, their use under current conditions would destroy the 19th century atmosphere at the post. For the life of this plan, neither is recommended, though technological or societal changes in the future may cause this conclusion to be revisited.
- The traderoom of the fort offers the most extensive display of materials and is the most efficient room to detail the true business of the post. The trade is indeed that piece on which the history of the fort pivots. Every effort should be made to staff this room as much as possible to take advantage of the interpretive opportunity to interact with visitors in this room. Park visitors often have many questions about the items on display and interpreters here are able to interpret the broad reach and implications of the trade carried on by Bent, St. Vrain & Company.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Bookstore

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) operates a bookstore and traderoom in the wagon shed area in the back of the fort. Besides the usual books and videos, this store includes a trade counter and shelving containing many items similar to those found on the shelves of the fort's original traderoom. Sales at this outlet have increase substantially since moving in to this space in spring 2006.

Recommendations:

- Continue to display and sell authentic and legitimate sales items related to the history of the fort and similar to those items found at the fort during the 19th century. Through continued research and review ensure that only appropriate items are stocked.
- Expand sales items as necessary to reflect current scholarship and research related to the site and the time period. Monitor new publications and stock as appropriate. Also work with WNPA to produce new sales publications, such as the archeological study of the fort and a book based on the Local Color submissions that the park submits to the local La Junta newspaper each week.

Wagon Shed

In 2006 the park completed renovations at the back of the fort that included creating a space to represent the original wagon shed of the fort. In September 2006 the park placed an original Santa Fe Trail freight wagon in this space. It will also be used to store the park's reproduction freight wagon during the off season.

Recommendation:

- Develop panels for this space to interpret the traffic on the Santa Fe Trade and the wagons that were used in that trade. A project statement to do this is already in the PMIS system, but has not yet gained funding. Update this statement as necessary and continue to pursue funding for this project.

Corral/Livestock

Due to access and safety issues the corral itself is not considered interpretive space, at least on the ground level. The corral and animals can be safely viewed from the rear bastion of the fort. This area of the fort (the corral) is interpreted in the self-guiding tour

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

booklet and there is also a site bulletin on the fort livestock. The livestock can also be viewed outside of the corral, depending on their location in the park. Sometimes they are adjacent to the fort itself or the fort trail. The peacocks can often be viewed inside or on the walls of the fort. At present staffing levels, the fort livestock are seldom used for interpretive programs, except during special events. Perhaps their most important current use is as part of parade entries in local communities.

Recommendations:

- The park needs to look closely at the whole issue of livestock at the site. At current staffing levels, the stock is not adequately used and is difficult to care for properly. Visitors do enjoy seeing the livestock, and it does certainly add to the atmosphere of the post just via their presence. However the cost in time and dollars of upkeep has to be weighed against the true interpretive contribution of the animals.
- To this end, this plan recommends the site develop a Livestock Plan. This should be a park-wide, integrated look at livestock in the park. Maintenance, as main caretakers of the animals, needs to be involved, as well as Resource Management staff (in regards to grazing on park lands) along with the Interpretive Division. This issue cannot be determined by the interpretive staff alone or within the scope of this interpretive plan.
- In future recruitment of staff for the fort, it may be appropriate to base some of the selection on applicant's skills and abilities related to care and use of livestock. This would ensure that the park staff has some experience working with animals and would be more apt to use them effectively in interpretive programming. The seasonal workforce selection done through the Washington Office allows the opportunity to identify livestock use and care as an important skill for employment. Livestock abilities could also be figured in to selections of local hires or student employees.
- The park might possibly consider a partnership with a local 4-H group, rodeo club, or even an entity such as the Colorado Boys Ranch for the care of the park livestock. This would create another tie between the park and the local community as well as relieving the park staff of some of the time consuming duties associated with the livestock.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

PERSONAL SERVICES

Personal interpretive services are those in which the historic site staff interacts with visitors. Examples of personal services include staffing the fort gate (zaguan), formal interpretive programs (tours or talks), informal (roving) interpretation, special events, orientation and educational programs. All of these give the park staff an opportunity to enhance the visitor's experience through personal interaction. Personal services are often most effective for interpreting complex or conceptual themes and topics.

Personal services encourage visitors to become active participants in exploring the park stories. A variety of formal and informal programs are offered at Bent's Old Fort including guided walks, demonstrations of 19th century skills and education programs. Because of the reconstructed nature of the fort and the desire to not clutter the historic scene with modern interpretive media, personal services are vital to create opportunities for visitors to truly understand and relate to the meanings and stories represented here.

The interpretive staff at the fort should assess which particular personal interpretive services will be most effective on a yearly basis. This is the core of the Annual Implementation Plan which will guide the interpretive program in supporting management goals and providing optimum opportunities for the visitor. This process includes yearly re-evaluation of Desired Visitor Experiences and subsequent assessment of the most effective combinations of interpretive themes, locations, audiences and types of personal services to best fulfill the visitor's needs. These factors can change from year to year as visitor demographics, funding and staffing, management needs, and knowledge of the site changes.

Recommendations:

- Critical opportunities for visitors at Bent's Old Fort are provided by the guided interpretive tours of the post led by interpreters in period dress. These programs provide visitors with a multitude of prospects for connecting with the fort's stories. They are flexible enough to embrace all of the primary park themes and expand upon them. It is very important to maintain this visitor opportunity, due to the historic setting achieved at the fort and the lack of modern interpretive media in the rooms. The current schedule of guided tours (lasting approximately 1 to 1¼ hours) should at least be maintained.
- Roving or informal interpretation also serves as a major component at the fort, as long as the staff is aggressively seeking out visitors and creating moments of opportunity. This is particularly beneficial to those visitors

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

that did not receive much orientation information or who are not using a self-guiding tour booklet.

- As mentioned above, an Annual Implementation Plan should be created and revised yearly. It is important to assess changes in management strategy, demographic shifts, and any new information that would modify our message to the visitor. One tool that helps to integrate inevitable change into a personal services program is the use of a matrix which

assesses the best combinations of current interpretive themes or sub-themes, best locations for services, and most effective services for particular audiences. This should in turn facilitate the park's desired visitor experiences. This is also a good time to assess whether we are best utilizing our resources to produce these desired visitor experiences and support management initiatives.

- Assessment of the effectiveness of the park's interpretive techniques and services is critical to maintaining positive visitor experiences and providing rationale for our programs. These assessments can include supervisory assessments of effectiveness through audits, a correlation of visitor inputs, and formal demographic or evaluative studies.
- Personal interpretive services continue to be an invaluable method of assuring that visitors "connect" with the resources and find personal meaning and relevance. At Bent's Fort the interpretation could be made even more effective by adding more staff representing more of the roles found at the fort during its operation. This would give visitors a better insight into daily life at the post. Naturally to accomplish this, staffing levels would need to increase appropriately.
- To be most effective the interpretive staff at the fort needs to keep busy and active with 19th century activities when not on tours or zagan duty. These ongoing demonstrations bring the fort to life for visitors and offer wonderful opportunities for interaction. As such current staff, along with any additional or new staff, need to be trained in appropriate historic skills such as blacksmithing, adobe making, medical care, carpentry, trading, trapping, packing, cooking, military drills, etc. Training of staff could be adjusted to concentrate on providing these skills. Additionally, positions might be recruited specifically based on historic craft skills.
- Scheduled demonstrations and/or costumed talks would be another method to expose visitors to historic skills and information. Demonstrations at set

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

times would allow visitors to plan their stay at the fort and receive a complete, if short, interpretive program. These demonstrations, lasting about 15 to 20 minutes could provide more exposure to the daily activities of the fort. The idea of these demonstrations should be broad, not restrictive, in order to include not just historic crafts, but also historic topics such as medical care, the history of the Santa Fe Trail, women on the frontier, wagons on the trail, the War with Mexico, the Plains tribes and other topics. Due to the limited visitation to the site, these

demonstrations or talks would need to be scheduled at times of highest visitation. As for the proposition that scheduling demonstrations or talks artificially set the fort work schedule, it must be noted that this is not an actual working fort, but is a fort with modern visitors on modern schedules.

- Personal services may also be the best way to describe the melting pot of people that lived together at Bent's Old Fort. In concordance with the NPS diversity policy, it would be beneficial to recruit interpreters that could represent the diversity that defined the fort in the historic period. This issue is explored further in the section below entitled "Staffing, Training and Recruiting."
- The park continues to need to develop the ability for historic weapon use at the park. One park employee received certification in historic weapons in 2006. In order to actually implement a weapons firing program at the site, additional work needs to be done in regards to storage and loading facilities. Such a firing program would be welcomed by site volunteers and visitors alike, especially during special events. This should be a short term priority for the park.
- The park should encourage participation by all interpretive staff in the Interpretive Development Program. This is the NPS primary professional training in interpretation and is critical for field level interpreters and interpretive supervisors. It will keep them abreast of the most effective interpretive methods and provide valuable insight into national policy.
- Higher staffing levels will be required for the park to fully support this plan. Realizing that budget levels are stagnant and spending power is actually decreasing yearly, it would be appropriate for the park to look at other methods of staffing or funding. An expansion of the numbers of park volunteers would certainly help, but in rural area with only small towns in the vicinity, volunteer recruitment is quite difficult. Also, the

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

infrastructure and support needed to field a large volunteer force can drain resources quickly.

- Finally, it is highly recommended that the park assess on a continuing basis whether these changes are effective in providing the visitor with better opportunities to understand and relate to the meanings represented in these resources. This can be as simple a process as observation or as complex as a visitor survey. Many NPS Cooperative Study Units

associated with universities can provide expertise in these areas. The current park partnership with Stephen F. Austin University offers a doorway to obtaining such a survey. Assuring that methods are effective is the best way to assure desired visitor experiences and support of management's desired outcomes. Examples of media project assessments that have been completed are available on the Harpers Ferry website.

EDUCATION PROGRAM

The current education program at Bent's Old Fort NHS centers around providing tours to school groups that visit the fort. Approximately 4,000 students, mostly Colorado 4th graders, visit the site, mainly in April and May. At this time there are no formal, developed pre- or post-visit activities for these groups. One traveling trunk on the Santa Fe Trail exists, and a few schools take advantage of this trunk before their visit. The park's Junior Ranger program which is included under this section is currently undergoing development through the auspices of the Western National Parks Association.

Recommendations:

- The site needs to develop a truly curriculum-based education program to tie in to Colorado teaching standards. This should include onsite activities and tours as well as appropriate pre- and post-visit activities. While it is difficult to make these activities mandatory, schools could be strongly encouraged to do them, and if they contribute to the curriculum, schools would be much more likely to do so. Due to limited staffing this program would be best administered by school staff rather than relying on park ranger visits. Workshops could be held to train area teachers about the education program. The program would also have to fit into current school schedules and priorities relating to Colorado achievement tests. Possible avenues to develop this sort of program are to submit a successful Parks As Classrooms project request to hire an educator to develop the program or to work with the Teacher-to-Ranger-to-Teacher program to obtain a teacher willing and able to do this.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Long term, the park needs to hire an Education Specialist to provide for and administer a full-scale education program for the park. This position could also serve as outreach and volunteer coordinator for the park allowing the current frontline park interpreter and the Chief of Interpretation the ability to spend more time on other park duties advancing the interpretation of the site.

- The park should continue to participate in the Teacher-to-Ranger-to-Teacher program, which places teachers in the parks for the summer months. Currently, an agreement exists with the Las Animas School District. The Intermountain Region also has agreements with Denver Public Schools. Efforts should be made again to sign an agreement with the East Otero (La Junta) School District to increase the local applicant pool. A previous attempt, in 2004, to reach an agreement with this school district was unsuccessful due to their attorney's concerns over liability issues.
- Continue to develop an enhanced Junior Ranger program in concert with Western National Parks Association. A new, fully developed program can inspire all visitors to further explore the opportunities at Bent's Old Fort with their children. This popular program is becoming a traveling point for many families, who seek out parks with fun and effective Junior Ranger programs.
- Other traveling trunks should be developed to tell different aspects of the park story. Multiple, duplicate trunks would allow for more schools or other organizations to use them. The park currently has one trunk, revolving around the story of the Santa Fe Trail. Additional trunks could first tell the story of the Native Americans associated with the site, then perhaps a trunk focusing specifically on Bent's Fort itself. A current project proposal is in the PMIS system for traveling trunks. The park needs to update and continue to seek funding for this proposal.
- The site should continue to offer the popular Kids' Quarters program. This ½ day activity is currently offered once each summer, allowing approximately 80-90 children the opportunity to take one of the fort's roles (trader, blacksmith, domestic, laborer, trappers, etc.) for a few hours. Since slots for this program usually fill, the park should consider offering the program perhaps twice per summer (June and August).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

SPECIAL EVENTS

Over the years Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site has offered a wide range of special events. These have included rendezvous, encampments, pow wows, the above mentioned Kids' Quarters, Winter Quarters training sessions and various holiday celebrations. At current staffing levels, the park is limited in what they can offer in terms of events. For the last several years the consistently presented four events: one Encampment (end of July), one Traditional Holiday Celebration (1st weekend in December), one Kids'

Quarters (June or August) and an Old Fashioned 4th of July program. One or two other smaller events have supplemented these some years. The park also tries to participate (as staffing and funding allows) in local events – parades and fairs, such as Santa Fe Trail Days in Las Animas, Early Settlers Day in La Junta, and the Arkansas Valley Fair in Rocky Ford. In 2005 and 2006 the park also had a booth at the State Fair in Pueblo.

Recommendations:

- The park should continue to offer its three core special events which have proven very popular with the public. This includes the Holiday Celebration in December, Kids’ Quarters in the summer (perhaps offering on two dates), and one main Encampment. Efforts should be made to “freshen” these events with new themes or activities, such as is being done in 2006 with the Explorers’ Encampment taking the place of the regular Santa Fe Trail Encampment. This will provide new things for returning visitors to see and experience. Also, in 2006 this main Encampment was moved from summer to fall to avoid the heat. It remains to be seen how this will impact attendance.
- In addition to these three core programs, the park should supplement each year with a couple more events such as the 4th of July, a “Night the Stars Fell” evening program, a wagon trip on the Santa Fe Trail, storytelling or some other similar event from the past. In an effort to reach out to underserved audiences, it is recommended here that one of these events focus particularly on the Hispanic or Native American populations. For instance, a Dies Y Seis De Septiembre program or a Plains Tribes Pow Wow. Although these activities might not be documented or necessarily historic accurate for the site, they are vital for making connections to communities that are a vital part of the site’s history (and are not very much involved at the site at this time). A special program should be developed for the 50th Anniversary of the park’s establishment in 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- In the future, as time and staffing allow, the park should also consider more scholarly activities based on the fort history such as fur trade seminars or scholar’s forums. These would reinforce the park’s role as an important historic area and cultivate relationships to further research into the park story.
- The park should continue to be involved with local community Special Events as much as possible. This provides needed exposure and strengthens ties to park supporters. At a minimum, the park should

continue to be involved in the Lower Arkansas Valley events (in La Junta, Las Animas and Rocky Ford). Efforts should be made to take the park message further afield whenever possible – such as to the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo (perhaps in conjunction with other Southern Colorado park units), Pioneer Days in Colorado Springs or even the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

- The grid below lists possible events for the park to choose from each year:

Special Event	Time of Year	A Core Event?
Kids Quarters	Summer	Yes
4 th of July	Summer	No
Living History Encampment	Summer Or Fall	Yes
Holiday Celebration	Winter	Yes
Living History Trng. (aka Winter Quarters)	Spring or Summer	No
Diez y Seis de Septiembre	Fall	No
Indian Encampment	Spring	No
Indian Pow Wow	Summer	No
Artists Encampment	Spring	No
Community College Course	Winter	No
Dinners at the Fort	Anytime	No
Parades & Fairs (Local Communities)	Spring, Summer, Fall	Yes
Founders Day	Summer	No
Rendezvous Outreach	Summer	No
Santa Fe Trail Wagon Caravan	Spring	No
Storytelling or other Evening Programs	Anytime	No

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

OUTLYING PARK AREAS

Besides the main interpretive point of the fort itself, the park offers some other areas for interpretive opportunities. These areas are addressed briefly below.

Cottonwood Grove and Arkansas River

At present a two-track dirt road leads from the back area of the fort down to the cottonwood grove and the Arkansas. Occasionally a visitor or two walks down this route

to see the river and enjoy this riparian environment. In addition, the park uses this area to set up camps for special events such as Encampments. A grant was secured in 2006 by Colorado Preservation, Inc. from the Colorado Historic Fund to create a trail in this area.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with Colorado Preservation Inc. to ensure the development and construction of the interpretive trail through this area. This represents the park’s greatest opportunity to interpret the natural environment of the park and tie that environment into the human history of the area. The trail as it is now planned will travel from the fort to the river and the cottonwoods, then proceed through the riparian forest back out toward the wetland where one loop would return to the fort; a longer loop would continue along between the wetland and the river eventually to the park’s eastern entrance sign and then back past the picnic area to the visitor parking lot. Seven interpretive panels are planned for the trail detailing the relationship between the environment and history of the site. In the long term there is a possibility of this trail tying in, via a pedestrian bridge, to a path on the other side of the river (see Southside of River section below).
- This area can continue to be used for special events such as the encampment, but the park should also explore the possibility of moving and/or rotating the sites of these events to lessen resource damage to the site and improve visitor access to the events (e.g. find areas closer to the fort or the trail from the visitor lot to the fort).

South Side of River

At present the 700 acres of the historic site located on the south side of the Arkansas River are not developed for visitor use. No official public access exists. There is a

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

system of fire roads through this area used by the park resource management staff. There is a possibility that during the life of this plan, local communities along with the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program will begin to develop a trail from La Junta to this area of the park. Discussions of this matter are only in the beginning phases.

Recommendation:

- The park should continue to monitor and be involved with community plans regarding a trail along the south side of the Arkansas River. Park employees need to be at the table if and when this project progresses. The

creation of such a trail will have major impacts on the park's resource management, maintenance and interpretive programs. Adjustments will have to be made to this plan and park priorities if this project comes to fruition during the life of this plan.

PICNIC AREA

In 2006 park maintenance staff did considerable work to rehabilitate the park picnic area. This included the building of a shade shelter, installing new picnic tables and improving accessibility. Though primarily for picnicking, the location of this area adjacent to some interpretive resources offers interpretive opportunities.

The park picnic area is located next to the 1930-era Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) arch constructed to mark the entrance to the fort site during that time period. At the arch is also a D.A.R. historical marker that originally marked the site of the fort (it was moved to this location when the fort was reconstructed).

Recommendation:

- The park should submit a project for funding to place a wayside panel at the edge of the picnic area interpreting the D.A.R. role in the preservation and protection of the fort site from the 1920s to the 1950s. Without this protection it is unlikely the site would be a national park unit today. The park could even pursue funding for this project through the Daughters of the American Revolution, who might be happy to commemorate their role. Any wayside exhibit would need to conform to NPS standards and should be developed with the NPS as overriding authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site does enjoy a fairly good relationship with the local community. Over the years, though the people and towns in the vicinity seem to have come to take the park somewhat for granted and do not realize the full impact of the park's visitation on the local economy or the potential for that impact to increase. Additionally, many local inhabitants have a somewhat "been there, done that" attitude toward the fort, and feel a visit 20 years ago will suffice for the rest of their lives. Local Hispanic communities do not have a strong tie to the fort, despite the huge role played by those of Hispanic heritage in the history of the post. Since the arrival of a new park

administration in 2004, the park has made great strides in getting involved once again with local Chambers and regional Tourism organizations.

Recommendations:

- The site should continue to be involved as much as possible with local and regional tourism groups such as the La Junta Chamber of Commerce, the Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism Group and Action 22. This keeps the park in the loop regarding tourism in the area and provides vital avenues for promotion of the park and park events.
- Park staff should continue to be involved with special events in the area as outlined in the section above. Besides entering parades, the park should attempt to have presence at booths at these events as staffing allows. The site should also looking at events at a further distance (such as Denver and Colorado Springs) to expose these population centers to the hidden treasure known as Bent's Old Fort.
- Again, as staff allows, the park should look to and/or agree to presenting offsite programs to area organizations (Rotary, Lions, etc.) and libraries to publicize new offerings and events at the fort.
- It is the recommendation of this plan that the park make every effort to continue the highly successful Trails and Rails program aboard Amtrak's *Southwest Chief*. In 2006, this program reached over 15,000 passengers over the course of 70 programs. Almost all programs are presented by volunteers, with the park providing oversight and management of the program. These presentations bring the National Park Service message to many who would otherwise be missed. It is suggested that all of the park interpretive staff gets rotated through this program to allow them to see it in action and offer their assistance in its presentation. At this point, the

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

program is offered 4 days per week. With additional volunteers and the possibility of a volunteer coordinator for the program, this program could be expanded to 6 days per week.

PARTNERSHIPS

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Sites enjoys productive relationships with many entities including Western National Parks Association (WNPA), area colleges and universities, local tourist organizations, Amtrak and the local newspaper, the La Junta Tribune Democrat.

These and other potential park partners have the potential of benefiting the park in many ways such as: cultural activities, building maintenance, staffing assistance, curriculum development, fundraising, interpretive services, knowledge and expertise, media announcements and publicity, photographs and artwork, research, planning and design assistance, service projects, training, writing and editing.

The park's Friends Group, the Bent's Old Fort Historical Association (BOFHA) has at this point basically suspended operations. BOFHA is a non-profit group that supports the educational mission of the park. The association formerly served as the park's Cooperating Association, but in 2001 they sold out the operation and turned it over to Southwest Parks and Monuments Association (today known as Western National Parks Association). Since changing their mission from cooperating association to friend's group, BOFHA has struggled to find their niche. A small but active core of participants kept the Association alive and involved in the Fort for a while, but was not successful in increasing membership or fund-raising capabilities. The park is looking to provide NPS-expertise, by way of regional office personnel, to assist the group in becoming active again. Prior to suspending activity, BOFHA sponsored a few events each year at the park by bringing in special speakers or presenters. This included a very successful storyteller program in October 2003 that attracted over 300 visitors. When up and running again the association could continue in this regard while potentially expanding its role in fund-raising for special park projects. Potentially, BOFHA could also be involved in publicizing the park and park events.

Recommendations:

- Western National Parks Association is a critical partner in providing interpretive services and achieving the desired future interpretive program. WNPA has proven very successful at the fort, increasing inventory, sales and support of interpretive operations. Much of the expense of putting on special events comes from WNPA funding. The park should continue this

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

relationship and continue to take advantage of assistance from WNPA, while also assisting in the Association's operations at the fort. A Scope of Sales Statement, defining how the cooperating association's sales operations contribute to the communication of the park's primary themes needs to be developed.

- The park should continue for as long as practical its relationship with the local newspaper, the La Junta Tribune Democrat, in publishing a weekly article on fort history and events in the Local Color insert of that paper.

This gives excellent and continual exposure to the site as well as offering a wonderful opportunity to interpret the fort story to the local population.

- The site needs to revisit efforts to get the Bent's Old Fort Historical Association back on its feet. Some preliminary work was done with the Intermountain Region Partnership office and the University of Denver to assist this group. Those efforts have not really gotten off the ground. If the park is to have a friends group, this task must be recommitted to and efforts redoubled. One suggested possibility is to somehow funnel the energy from the park's volunteer corps into the friends group by some sort of merging of the two. This is a critical and difficult issue for the park.
- Relationships with colleges and universities need to be continued and cultivated. Through the STEP and SCEP programs the park is able to secure much needed local assistance for the park's interpretive staffing. Stephen F. Austin University is now assisting the park with the interpretive wayside panels for the site's orientation plaza. Adams State College has secured a Teaching American History grant and is interested in partnering with the site for a teacher workshop. These endeavors establish relationships with entities that can help the park move toward its desired future interpretive program.
- The park needs to develop working relationships with affiliated American Indian groups and Native American organizations. Currently the site works with the University of Colorado at Denver on the Place and Native Voice project to place Native American interpreters at the site and incorporate Native American themes and information into the interpretive program. The park does work with a couple of individual American Indians during special events, but needs to find more assistance in this area. Through these programs, and other routes, the park needs to continue to build up the interpretation of the Native American side of the park story.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- It would be good for the park to develop contacts and connections to other fur trade sites and organizations. This would not only include other NPS units such as Fort Union Trading Post and Fort Laramie, but other sites like the Museum of the Fur Trade in Chadron, Nebraska.
- It is important to clarify the value of these relationships to staff. Partnerships can be very empowering, but to be so need the full support of management and staff.

- Finally, while all of this talk of relationship building and partnerships is wonderful, it is recognized that without further resources, the park is very limited in what it can do. The staff is already stretched thin, and all of these partnerships take a lot of time. So at this time much of this work will need to be postponed. Again, the call here is for the eventual filling of another position in the Interpretive Division (Education Specialist) whose duties would also include outreach and partnerships.
- The table below summarizes some of the current and potential partnerships for Bent's Old Fort:

Current and Potential Partners	Types of Assistance						
	<i>Fundraising</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Advocacy</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Distribution of Information</i>	<i>Special Events Assistance</i>	<i>Labor for Service Projects, etc.</i>
Western National Parks Association	*	*		*			
Bent's Old Fort Historical Association (Friends Group)	*		*		*	*	*
Colleges and Universities				*	*		*
Interpretive Volunteers		*		*	*	*	*
Santa Fe Trail Association	*		*	*	*	*	*
Local School Districts		*			*		*
Local Scouting Organizations					*	*	*
NPS Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units				*	*		*

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Current and Potential Partners	<i>Fundraising</i>	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Advocacy</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Distribution of Information</i>	<i>Special Events Assistance</i>	<i>Labor for Service Projects, etc.</i>
The Tesoro Foundation	*		*		*		
Affiliated American Indian Groups		*	*	*	*	*	
Western History Association				*	*		

Organization of American Historians				*	*		
The Museum of the Fur Trade			*	*	*	*	
The Colorado Historical Society				*	*	*	
The New Mexico Historical Society				*	*	*	
Fur Trade Re-enactment Groups	*		*		*	*	*

SERVICES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

The park maintains several electric golf carts, which are utilized for transporting disabled or elderly visitors upon request. The lower level of the fort has been modified to accommodate disabled visitors as well, with room access and appropriate restroom available. The upper level of the fort remains unavailable to those in wheelchairs. The park self-guiding booklet provides some information and photos of those rooms. The park's current and new films are captioned. The site's many touchable items, along with smells and sounds, lend themselves to interpretation to the sight-impaired.

Recommendations:

- A more complete book of photographs of the upstairs rooms, along with interpretive information could be produced in an album format to allow wheelchair visitors to get a sense of those rooms.
- When developing the new waysides, exhibits or other interpretive media, the design should not just accommodate disabled visitors, but should be designed to fully involve those visitors in the interpretive opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH NEEDS

The park library is located in the Administration Building located about ½ mile from the fort itself near Highway 194. It contains approximately 2,000 books dealing principally with the Fur Trade era and the Santa Fe Trail. The library is open to researchers on a case-by-case basis. The location of the library, at a distance from the fort, makes it difficult for interpreters to consult texts when needed for research or to more immediately answer visitor questions. Many of the collection and research needs listed below are not

possible to accomplish at current staffing levels. Some projects might be taken on by volunteers or park partners.

Recommendations:

- Create a small research library of the most important and helpful volumes at the fort interpreter’s office for use by staff stationed at the fort. This may involve purchasing additional copies of some texts.
- Assess the library to identify publications that are missing or need to be replaced or purchased; assess library finding aids; develop a public use plan for the library
- Obtain more images of interpretive activities at the Fort, including visitors engaged in activities; also develop library of images that relate to period clothing, equipment and everyday objects during the Fort period.
- Conduct ongoing research on clothing, equipment and other objects of the fort period, especially items that are known to have been found at the fort; research manufacturers and suppliers of authentic replicas; develop a replacement schedule for the collection.
- Obtain the following resource-based research: broad-based historic resource studies on the Fur Trade of the Southern Plains; the America Indians of the Southern Plains; and New Mexicans of the historic period; a natural resource study focusing on historic ecosystems in the park.
- Obtain the following visitor-focused research: a study to assess the differences between the intended results of interpretive programming and actual visitor learning; a student assessment that would measure the retention of curricula-based information over time; development of a measurement instrument that will allow for gauging the understanding of the history of the period by interpretive staff and volunteers.

STAFFING AND TRAINING

Staffing and Training

In order to achieve much of the desired interpretive program outlined in this plan, the park would obviously need increased staffing. Under present budgetary and political conditions, that would seem difficult to achieve, but it should still be a goal. Ideally, the staff would be two GS-9 park rangers (one identified as an Education/Outreach Specialist), one GS-5 park guide and one GS-5 subject-to-furlough park guide. In the more realistic future, much of the work of this plan will need to be addressed by the one current GS-9 ranger and the GS-11 division chief. In order for more than just the minimum to be accomplished, the first priority should be to establish and fill one GS-9

education/outreach specialist for the park. An OFS statement to this effect has been created and entered.

In terms of seasonal staffing, the park should concentrate on getting applicants with the appropriate 19th century skills and interests to be effective interpreters at the site. Also, the Intermountain Workforce Enhancement Office and their recruiting files should be used to obtain a diverse workforce more reflective of the historic fort population. Lack of park housing can make it difficult for those from out of the area to come to the park for the summer. The park should continue to make connections with local housing providers in this regard. Another sticky situation is the issue of gender in regards to historic fort populations. To be reflective of historic times, the fort would mostly be staffed by males, with some Indian and Hispanic women. Current recruiting situations, along with Equal Opportunity issues, make this somewhat unrealistic. In this case, the staff needs to interpret to visitors the true nature of the historic population make up of the fort.

Training for staff should concentrate more on historic living history skills in order for those skills to be demonstrated to the visiting public.

Living History Volunteers and Training

Living history interpretive volunteers have played an important role in interpretive programs at the fort since the late 1970s. Large numbers of visitors have learned about Bent, St.Vrain & Company and the history of the Fur Trade in the West from these talented and highly motivated interpreters.

One issue for long term volunteers is again the lack of park housing. One solution is the installation of pads for volunteers to use for recreational vehicles. Every year the park turns down a few potential volunteers due to the lack of these facilities. A project has been submitted for Volunteer-In-Parks funding for the construction of these pads.

STAFFING AND TRAINING

The park should continue with the quarterly park newsletter which provides updates for site volunteers. Additionally, the park could explore a volunteer website to disseminate information and provide a discussion area for park volunteers.

The overall key to ensuring that the volunteer aspect of the interpretive program continues to be valuable to park visitors is providing these volunteer interpreters with **appropriate training opportunities in history and interpretive skills and feedback on their performance**. A potential training grid for park volunteers is listing below. This would have to be phased in over time and would require additional resources that the park does not have at this time.

Interpretive Training for Volunteers

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Master Interpreter
Basic Interpretive Training	Level One Certification	Level Two Certification	Level Three Certification
NPS Interpretive Competency 101	NPS Interpretive Competency 102	NPS Interpretive Competency 103	NPS Interp Planning Competencies
Reading of Special Event Handbook	Further Reading	Further Reading	Interpretive Writing Competency
Reading of Bent's Fort by David Lavender	Supervised Research	Independent Research	Visit to MOMCC or ALHFAM annual training
Basic Living History Training (Park Level)	Intermediate Living History Training (NAI Section for Living History Interpretation)	Certified Interpretive Guide Training by the National Association for Interpretation	Advanced Living History Training (Williamsburg, Plymouth Plantation, MOMCC, or ALHFAM)
Background on NPS History and Mission			
Library Training			
Safety Training	First Aid Training	Livestock safety training	

NAI = National Association for Interpretation
MOMCC = Midwest Outdoor Museums Coordinating Committee
ALHFAM = Association for Living History Farms and Museums

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Recommended Activity	Short Term (1-2 years)	Medium Term (3-5 Years)	Long Term (6-10 Years)
Provide training on park services and events	X		
Work with potential La Junta Info. Center		X	
Improve and install new highway signs to fort		X	
Improve Internet site including virtual tour		X	
Develop display for transportation hubs			X

Complete Interp Plaza/ Kiosk at Parking Lot	X		
Remove Mather Plaque at Trailhead	X		
Install interpretive wayside at Trailhead	X		
Complete new film and install in video room	X		
Relocate or remodel video room for comfort			X
Staff fort trade room as much as possible	X		
Expand publications – book based on Local Color articles	X		
Develop interp panels for wagon shed		X	
Produce park livestock plan		X	
Resume scheduled demonstrations/talks	X		
Implement historic weapons firing (install storage/loading shed)	X		
Visitor survey project to evaluate interpretation		X	
Establish curriculum- based educ. program		X	
Hire Education Specialist for the park			X
Complete and launch new Jr. Rgr. program	X		
Create new traveling trunks		X	
Stage one different special event each year on rotating basis	X		

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Recommended Activity	Short Term (1-2 years)	Medium Term (3-5 Years)	Long Term (6-10 Years)
Special Program for 50 th Anniversary of site's establishment in 2010		X	
Expand park outreach to larger markets (Colo. Spgs. and Denver)		X	
Create interp. trail to cottonwoods and wetlands with CPI grant	X		
Work with local govt.			X

and RTCA on Ark. River Trail (south side)			
Install wayside panel at D.A.R. arch & marker		X	
Revive BOFHA (Park Friends Group)	X		
Develop working relationship with affiliated tribes	X		
Develop ties with other fur trade sites		X	
Create album of photos of 2 nd floor room for wheelchair users	X		
Establish small research library at fort office	X		
Obtain more photos of interp activities	X		
Obtain historic resource study of fur trade on the Southern Plains			X
Obtain visitor services project study of interp programming		X	
Build VIP pads on site for long term volunteers		X	
Phase in training grid for park volunteers			X
Complete Interpretive Database for park	X		
Develop Scope of Sales Statement with WNPA		X	

APPENDIX I: INTERPRETIVE LOCATION AND SERVICE MATRIX

**Location / Interpretive Activity Sets
Long Range Interpretive Plan
Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
September 2006**

- 1) Visitor Parking Lot
 - A) Interpretive plaza/fee kiosk

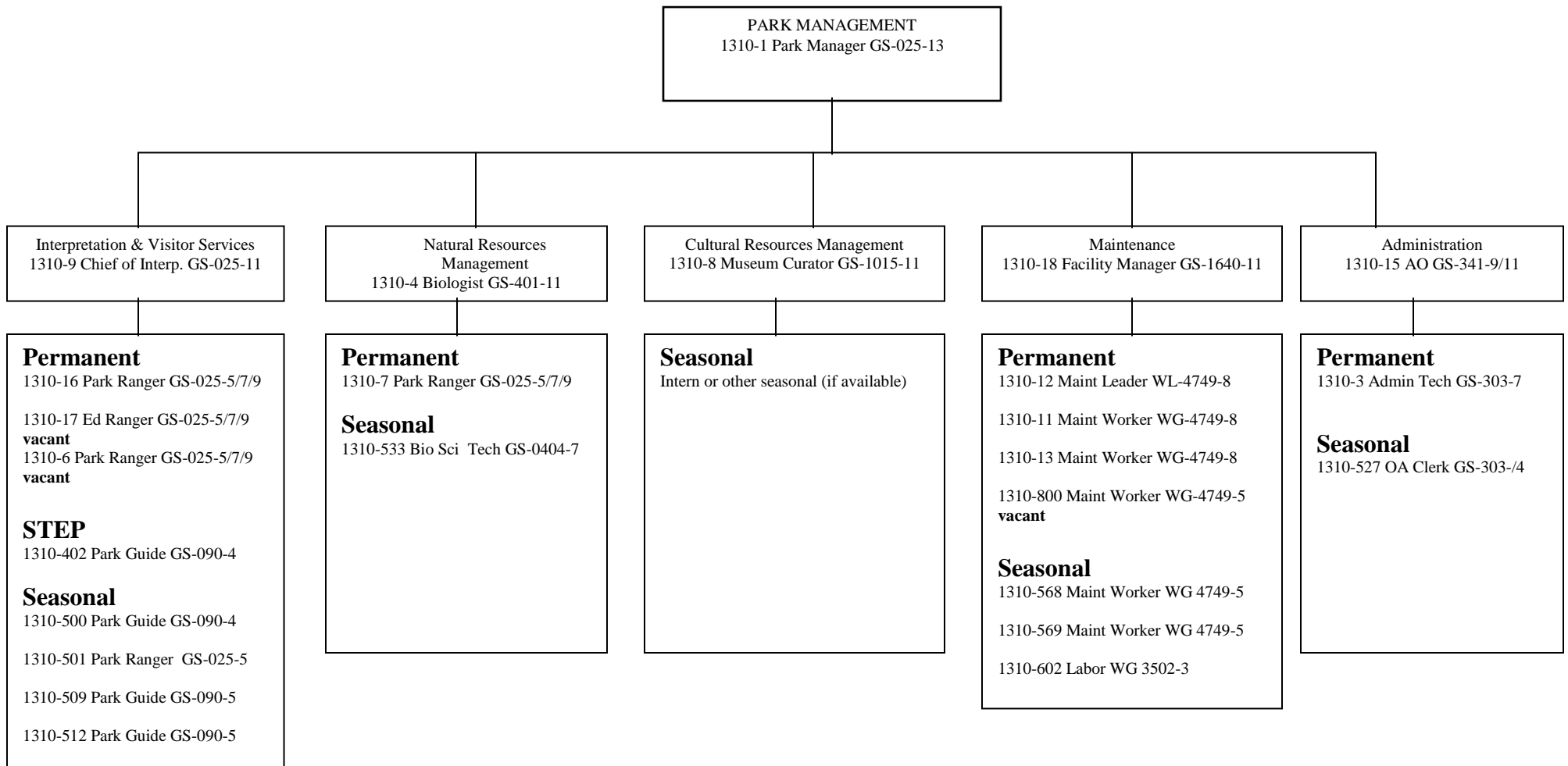
- B) Changeable bulletin board
 - C) Phone for shuttle rides
- 2) Trail to Fort
 - A) Interpretive panel at trailhead
 - B) No other panels along trail (to preserve experience)
 - 3) Zaguán (Fort entrance gate)
 - A) Maintain personal contact – first meeting of visitor/staff
 - B) Possible buzzer at trailhead to notify fort staff of visitors
 - 4) Audiovisual Program
 - A) New film on DVD
 - B) Relocate or rehab room for comfort (long term)
 - 5) Fort Rooms
 - A) Maintain 1840s look
 - B) Staff Traderoom as much as possible
 - C) More staff demonstrations
 - D) Both ongoing and scheduled demonstrations
 - 6) Bookstore
 - A) Expand items
 - B) New publication based on Local Color articles
 - 7) Wagon Shed
 - A) Interpretive panel about wagons for the trade
 - 8) Corral
 - A) Prepare Livestock Plan
 - B) Possible partnerships for livestock care and use
 - 9) Cottonwood Grove/Arkansas River
 - A) Interpretive trail with 7 panels on interaction of natural and human history
 - B) Special event use

APPENDIX I: INTERPRETIVE LOCATION AND SERVICE MATRIX

- 10) South Side of River
 - A) Potential trail from La Junta to historic site
- 11) Picnic Area
 - A) Interpretive panel about Daughters of American Revolution Arch/Marker

- 12) Internet
 - A) Virtual tour
 - B) Association Bookstore online
 - C) Volunteer site and blog
 - D) NPS Internet Site
 - 1. Expand orientation information
 - 2. Expand links to other similar NPS units
 - E) Regional Tourist Internet Sites
 - 1. Santa Fe Trail Scenic and Historic Byway
 - 2. AAA website
 - 3. exploresoutheastcolorado.com
 - F) Historic Internet Sites (mutual linking)
 - 1. Fur trade sites
 - 2. Native American Sites

APPENDIX II: CURRENT PARK STAFFING DIAGRAM



APPENDIX III: ACCESSIBILITY

Every attempt will be made to promote full access to interpretive media and programs to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to national parks. This is in compliance with National Park Service policy:

“...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience for everyone.”

NPS Special Directive 83-3, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

All interpretation will follow general standards for accessibility as described in the Harpers Ferry Center Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

References Used

Larsen, David L., editor. Meaningful Interpretation: How to Connect Hearts and Minds to Places, Objects, and Other Resources. Eastern National, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, 2003.

Lavender, David. Bent's Fort. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1954.

Littlejohn, Margaret. Visitor Services Project – Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, 1993.

National Park Service. Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan, Development Concept Plan for Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. 1994.

National Park Service. Interpretive Prospectus – Bent's Old Fort NHS. 1994.

National Park Service. Statement for Management – Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. 1995.

The State Historical Society of Colorado. Bent's Old Fort. Williams Printing, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1979.

PLANNING TEAM AND CONSULTANTS

Long Range Interpretive Plan Writing and Editing:

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site:

Rick Wallner, Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services

Greg Holt, Park Ranger

Cindy Ott-Jones, Superintendent

Intermountain Regional Office:

Kim Sikoryak, Interpretive Specialist

Rich Kohen, Interpretive Specialist

Harpers Ferry Center:

Rick Jones, Interpretive Planner

PLANNING GROUP PARTICIPANTS		
Name	Title	Organization
Bill George	Park Ranger	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Bob Larison	Volunteer/Board member	Bent's Old Fort Historical Association
Brion L. Schaner	Maintenance Work leader	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Colleen Cometsevak		Sand Creek Descendants Organization
Dexter W. Hess	Botanist	
Don Headlee don.headlee@usace.army.mil	Park Ranger	US Army Corps of Engineers
Don Hill	Superintendent	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Don Troyer	Park Guide	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Dub Couch	President of Bents Old Fort Chapter	Santa Fe Trail Association
Eric Weisman	Park Ranger	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Eva Jepson	Manager, WNPA outlet at BEOL	Western National Parks Association
Fran Pannebaker fpannebaker@hotmail.com	OJC/NPS Natural Resources	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Gale Casebolt	Park Neighbor	
Greg Holt	Park Ranger	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Joan Casebolt	Park Neighbor	
Joe Big Medicine		Sand Creek Representative
John C. F. Luzader	Interpreter	Living Museums of the West and chair of the Living History section of NAI
John R Sweet jnsweet@aol.com	History Professor	Pikes Peak Community College
Kathy Davis	Volunteer	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Laird Cometsevak		Sand Creek Descendant
Michelle Oehmichen	Chief of Interpretation	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Nancy Keohane	Chief of Natural Resources	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Nancy Russell	Curator	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Richard F Carrillo cuartejejo@centurytel.net	Cuartejejo HP Associates Inc.	Boggsville Historic Site
Sharon A. Brown	Interpretive Specialist	NPS Long Distance Trails office
Steve Clark	Administrative Officer	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Steve Thede	Chief of Interp. and Cult. Resources	Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
<i>Lorenzo Vigil</i>	<i>Interpretive Planner / Lead Ranger</i>	<i>Pecos National Historical Park</i>
<i>David Elkwitz</i>	<i>Interpretive Planner</i>	<i>Prince William Forest Park</i>

CORE TEAM PARTICIPANTS		
Name	Title	Organization
Bill George	Park Ranger	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Brion L. Schaner	Maintenance Work leader	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Craig Moore	Park Ranger	Washita Battlefield National Historic Site
Don Hill	Superintendent	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Eric Weisman	Park Ranger	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Greg Holt	Park Ranger	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
John R Sweet jinisweet@aol.com	History Professor	Pikes Peak Community College
Michelle Oehmichen	Chief of Interpretation	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Nancy Keohane	Chief of Natural Resources	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Nancy Russell	Curator	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
Steve Clark	Administrative Officer	Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
<i>Lorenzo Vigil</i>	<i>Interpretive Planner</i>	<i>Pecos NHP</i>
<i>David Elkowitz</i>	<i>Interpretive Planner</i>	<i>Prince William Forest Park</i>