

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument Superintendent Update, October 2009

Kate Hammond

Fall has officially arrived here and we've been busy winding down our summer, closing out our fiscal year and saying goodbye to the last of our seasonal staff. Having lived through my first summer season, I have a newfound appreciation for the importance of our seasonal staff—they really are the front line of the National Park Service (NPS) at the Battlefield (LIBI) and we had a great crew this past summer.

Here are some highlights from the past few months:

133rd Anniversary – We observed the 133rd Anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn this year with special programs June 24-28, 2009. Highlights included hosting a program by the Arikara Old Scout's Society from North Dakota; a Lakota program by Enos Poor Bear, Jr. of South Dakota; and the annual Big Horn riders and Morning Star riders equestrian programs.

Descendents of Northern Cheyenne warrior Noisy Walking conducted a special ceremony at the Noisy Walking marker on Battle Ridge followed by a program at the amphitheater about Northern Cheyenne participation in the battle and an honoring ceremony for former Battlefield Superintendent Barbara Sutteer, current Superintendent Kate Hammond and Historian John Doerner in recognition of their service to the Battlefield.

Friends of Little Bighorn Battlefield volunteers once again provided outstanding interpretation on park trails. Steve Alexander, living history portrayer, conducted the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Last Stand Hill and the Indian Memorial, and the Custer Battlefield Historical and Museum Association laid wreaths at the Reno-Benteen and Last Stand Hill monuments. Michael Terry, well known Plains Indian historian, presented special programs to park visitors during Anniversary weekend.

Over Anniversary weekend I had the pleasure to attend the Friends of Little Bighorn Battlefield annual meeting, the CBHMA annual meeting and symposium and one evening of the Little Big Horn Associates conference, which was held in Billings this year. It was a pleasure to meet so many folks who are so dedicated to and passionate about Little Bighorn Battlefield, its story and its resources.

Visitation – After trending downward for the last six years, visitation (through August) is up 9.79% over last year's figures. Other National Park sites around the country are experiencing similar increases.

Winter Hours – Winter hours (8:00 AM to 4:30 PM daily) went into effect on October 25, including the Visitor Center and Custer National Cemetery. The self-guiding tour road to Reno-Benteen Battlefield will be open from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily.

New Prairie Wildlife Nature Guide and Checklist – Melana Stichman, our natural resource specialist, is finalizing a Prairie Wildlife Nature Guide and Checklist color brochure. The free full-color prairie wildlife nature guide and checklist will be an important reference for visitors to identify plants, birds, animals and reptiles living in our unique prairie ecosystem and was funded through our Recreational Fee Program.

Prairie Plant Identification Sign Project – Shane Archuleta, natural resource biotech seasonal ranger, completed an important prairie identification interpretive sign project. The small low profile signs are located along the new Indian Memorial interpretive trail below Last Stand Hill (adjacent to the 1984 Archeological Survey wayside) and help visitors to identify and interpret a small sampling of nine unique prairie plants. The signs were funded through our Recreational Fee Program. More information and photos of the project can be found at www.friendslittlebighorn.com.

Museum Curator Position – Sharon Small resigned from her position as museum curator under the NPS Student Career Employment Program (SCEP). The museum curator GS-7/9/11 position was posted on www.usajobs.gov until October 14, 2009.

New Museum Exhibit Case – We anticipate delivery of a new museum exhibit case this fall to replace a case donated years ago by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. The new exhibit case was made by the same manufacturer of our other cases to standardize our exhibits and will be installed in the museum gallery below *After the Battle*, the painting by Ken Ralston. A new museum exhibit is planned and we will have more news on this in the future.

White Swan Library – Battlefield Chief Historian John A. Doerner has been keeping up the library collection and announced that we now have 5069 books pertaining to the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Little Bighorn Battlefield, Indian Wars, Plains Indians, Frontier Army, Natural Resources and NPS related subjects accessioned into the library collection.

Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) – We are in the process of finalizing the CLI, a joint partnership between the NPS and Utah State University. The CLI is an important planning document that provides an accurate up-to-date baseline of the powerful cultural landscape here. We hope to finalize it this year and to be available to the public both in hard copy and on-line formats. More information will be available in the next update.

Cultural Resource Team Workshop – In June the park hosted a review of Cultural Resource management at LIBI to look at the park's needs for curation, archeology, history, cultural landscapes, ethnography and other cultural resource programs and to develop a list of potential projects and priorities.

The workshop resulted in eleven priorities for LIBI cultural resource management: 1) Addressing Museum Collections Storage issues; 2) Developing Resource Significance Maps to aid in future planning/development; 3) Digitizing Museum and Library Collection; 4) Producing an Environmental History of 1876 Landscape; 5) Completing an Archeological Overview and Assessment; 6) Completing Historic Resource Study/Base Map/Historic Register Nomination Updates; 7) Developing a Consultation Plan with our twelve historically affiliated tribes; 8) Completing an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment; 9) Developing Cemetery Headstones Conservation Plan and Treatment; 10) Completing a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR); and 11) Conducting an Oral Histories Project.

LIBI staff is already moving forward with developing project statements and identifying funding sources to accomplish some of these priority projects.

Tribal Consultation Meeting – During the month of May, I traveled through Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota to visit with tribal leaders from eight of our twelve affiliated tribes. We held a consultation meeting at the Battlefield in September on battlefield related projects

and overall stewardship of LIBI. While not all the tribes were able to attend, I was very pleased with the turnout and positive results from the meeting. In fact, we are already looking at scheduling another follow-up in the future to maintain communication and open dialogue between us.

Friends of Little Bighorn – Bob Reece, President of Friends, reports: “It has been a record breaking year for Friends support of projects at Little Bighorn Battlefield. In addition to \$3500 donated to NPS in March 2009, Friends has recently announced the donation of \$10,000 to fund and support an Archeological Overview and Assessment of Little Bighorn Battlefield by Douglas D. Scott. This important project is a working document that will include an extensive historical overview and evaluation of archeology at LIBI, complete with maps, photographs, and illustrations, and will provide NPS managers recommendations for future archeological research. The Archeological Overview and Assessment is slated for publication and will be available to the public.”

Friends also established a Facebook page on our website. which provides a vehicle for timely news regarding the work we are doing together to help the Battlefield. You can access this important new feature on the homepage of our website at www.friendslittlebighorn.com and click on the headline for Facebook, or the Facebook “F” icon.

I would like to take this opportunity again to thank the Friends organization and its dedicated members who helped us during the annual trails interpretation at the battlefield June 26-27, 2009. During our general Membership Meeting on Saturday, June 27, I brought our members up to date on important news and projects at the battlefield. I enjoyed the opportunity finally to meet many of the dedicated members who share my love and passion for this very special place. I look forward to future board meetings with Friends as we continue to work closely with the NPS on important projects and mutual partnership of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

Subj: **LIBI Superintendent's Update Sept 2009**
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Lee,

Attached is our latest Superintendent's Update for Little Bighorn
Battlefield National Monument.

John

(See attached file: Superintenden Update sept2009final.doc)

Thursday, October 01, 2009 AOL: CLeeNoyes