

Little River Canyon National Preserve

Long-Range Interpretive Plan

Prepared for
Little River Canyon National Preserve, Fort Payne, AL

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INTRODUCTION: A RIVER ON A MOUNTAIN

The first glimpse of Little River Falls is stunning: a shining white avalanche of water roaring over a rocky cliff and dropping, far below, into a deep foaming pool. Enclosed in a canyon 500 feet deep in places, Little River displays its immense power to carve and shape the bedrock of the earth as it flows unchecked for miles. The centerpiece of Little River Canyon National Preserve, this unusual river runs for most of its length along the top of Lookout Mountain on the Cumberland Plateau, a distinct physiographic region just west of the main uplift of the Appalachian Mountains. The Little River is one of the nation's Outstanding National Resources Waters and also has protection under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Established in 1992, Little River Canyon National Preserve encompasses 15,000 acres of mountain top, split incongruously by its deep canyon. The 24-mile Canyon Rim Road entices visitors with dizzying scenic overlooks, soaring raptors, brilliant leaf color, and sandstone cliffs containing fossils millions of years old.

Little River Canyon National Preserve also includes evidence of more than 10,000 years of human presence, from ancient hunters to 19th-century settlers, and from the cruel tragedy of the Trail of Tears to the stonework legacies of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Today the preserve protects more than 100 rare, threatened, or endangered plants and animals, rare habitats, archeological and historic home sites, and much more. An international destination for extreme kayaking and climbing and a local favorite for hunting and backcountry horseback riding, the preserve is also widely known – and increasingly popular – as a beautiful but dangerous natural swimming area.

The Planning Process

In the hierarchy of planning used by the National Park Service, interpretive planning is unique. Rather than focusing on finances, facilities, management, or other internal matters, interpretive planning focuses on a park's most important external concern: its visitors. Who are they? Why do they visit? What do they expect? How do they experience, understand, and interpret the park and its resources?

Drawing on the park mission, founding legislation, and purpose and significance statements, an interpretive plan recommends ways to help park interpretive staff improve visitors' experiences, making each person's visit more rewarding, engaging, and meaningful. Park interpretive programming – whether delivered via personal tours, wayside panels, exhibits, or digital media – offers a diverse menu of high-quality options that enable visitors of differing abilities and interests to access and enjoy a site to the fullest.

The planning process leading to this Long-Range Interpretive Plan began in early 2018 with a series of day-long workshops bringing together stakeholders and volunteers, partners, civic leaders, and NPS management and staff. (For a list of participants, see Appendix B.) Working together, the planning participants, park staff, and a consultant team explored audience trends, identified desired visitor experiences, and developed recommendations for interpretive programming over the next three to five years.

Barring legislative changes, the foundational elements of this plan are expected to remain constant. However, as with any planning effort, specific recommendations for programs or media may need to be updated as staffing, funding, technology, scholarship, or resource conditions change.

PART ONE: BACKGROUND FOR PLANNING

Legislative History

Established in 1992 by Public Law 102-427, Little River Canyon National Preserve was created “to protect and preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources of Little River Canyon area in DeKalb and Cherokee Counties, Alabama, and to provide for the protection and public enjoyment of those resources...” Today the preserve protects 11,042 acres (of an authorized 15,000), including DeSoto State Park on its northern end as well as backcountry and a wildlife management area open to hunting and trapping.

Purpose and Significance Statements

Statements of a park’s purpose and significance are derived from the enabling legislation and identify why a park was created and why its specific resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. Generally, these statements do not change during the life of a park unless new legislation authorizes new reasons for the park’s existence.

The 2016 Foundation Document for Little River Canyon National Preserve identified the following purpose and significance statements for the preserve:

Park Purpose

Little River Canyon National Preserve protects and provides for the enjoyment of the scenery, ecology, and history surrounding one of the Southeast’s deepest canyons, carved by the nation’s longest mountain-top river.

Statements of Significance

- Little River Canyon is the deepest canyon in Alabama, and it is one of the deepest in the southeast United States. It contains the highest above-ground waterfall in the state and is resplendent with sheer rock walls, cascading waters, and ever-changing seasonal views.
- With exceptional recreational opportunities, Little River Canyon provides world-class whitewater paddling, internationally renowned climbing, and more than 8,000 acres of public lands open to hunting, fishing, and trapping.
- The Little River is the only river in the United States that forms on and flows almost its entire length along a mountain top. Little River’s high water quality supports biological diversity, exceptional aquatic riparian communities, and rare and endemic species. This mountain-top river is designated as an Alabama Outstanding National Resource Water.

- The location of the preserve along the southern limits of the Cumberland Plateau contributes to a rare assemblage of plants and animals, including the endangered green pitcher plant.

Interpretive Themes

In the field of interpretation, primary interpretive themes are concise, clear statements that summarize a park's "main messages" or inherent meanings. These big-picture concepts are guidelines for making connections between a park's physical resources (a rushing river, rugged cliffs) and the larger, more universal meanings of a place or event. To visitors, these thematic guidelines are invisible. Strong interpretive storytelling – in person or through artifacts and media – brings each theme's unique stories to life.

In the 2018 planning process, six existing interpretive themes for Little River Canyon Preserve were carried forward from the 2016 Foundation Document. After much discussion, the planning team proposed one additional theme on visitor safety.

Because the field of interpretation is evolving, future programs and services at Little River Canyon National Preserve will be challenged to go beyond the traditional use of interpretive themes, employing "essential questions" and other audience-centered methods to engage visitors. As summarized in the 2017 NPS document *Foundations of 21st-Century Interpretation*:

Effective interpretation explores controversial and complex issues as a means of finding natural and cultural resources' evolving relevance in today's community. Interpretation honors and incorporates different types of truth – forensic/academic, personal, societal, and reconciliatory – and uses essential questions to invite dialogue, foster awareness, probe truths, and encourage collaborative solutions.

Audience-centered programs and media must be dynamic and flexible, with intentional design and clear purpose. A cohesive experience for the audience is achieved by exploring an essential question or relevant idea supported by a purposeful interpretive framework. Essential questions are based on understanding of the resource, audience and the broader social context.

Accordingly, the planning group identified a set of essential questions related to each primary interpretive theme. The seven interpretive themes for Little River Canyon National Preserve, along with related essential questions, are presented below.

The Canyon

With its rugged towering rock bluffs and the roaring river below, the Little River Canyon offers a place of solitude, beauty, and awe, showcasing the power of water and its ability to dramatically change the landscape forever.

- Why does Little River Canyon need to be protected?

- Who is protecting Little River Canyon? Who are we protecting it from? Who are we protecting it for?
- How do you perceive the beauty of the canyon? What is your definition of beauty?

Little River

Little River is a source of life and renewal, providing habitat for a high diversity of benthic invertebrates and good water quality for flora and fauna thriving in the corridor.

- Why does Little River Canyon need to be protected?
- Why do we need a clean river?
- How would it affect your experience here if the river was full of litter and smelled bad?
- Are humans the only animals that soil their nests?

Plant and Animal Communities

The preserve provides niche habitats for ecological communities such as Appalachian bogs and Cumberland sandstone glades and is a home for rare plants and animals to survive.

- Why should the green pitcher plant and other fragile species be protected?
- Why do we protect animals perceived to be dangerous (black bears, snakes) in the preserve?

Cultural Resources

Visitors are inspired by stories of survival and great adversity as they discover and explore the artifacts and history of native peoples and early settlers who have lived on the lands, sourced life from Little River, and enjoyed the beauty of the canyon.

- Why can't I go see the archeological sites in the preserve?
- Why would one choose to live on top of Lookout Mountain? How did earlier inhabitants survive up here?
- Why protect history?
- What constitutes an artifact?

Backcountry

The wildness of the backcountry area allows visitors to interact with the landscape and develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the natural scenery, forests, and habitats of northeastern Alabama.

- What about irresponsible use of the back country?
- What can be achieved by getting out of the vehicle?

Recreation

The preserve is a place where visitors seek the invigoration of whitewater boating, the challenge of sheer wall climbing, and the solitude of hiking into the depths of the canyon; visitors seek a type of recreation and discover rejuvenation that only nature can provide.

- What is wild?
- Are humans the only animals who do dangerous activities for thrills?
- How many people are too many? Who decides, and why?

Visitor Safety

Personal safety is a paramount concern at the preserve as visitors seek excitement and fun amid the wild beauty of Little River Canyon.

- What obligation do visitors have for one another's safety?
- Why can't I jump off the falls?
- Why can't I do what I want here, even if it is dangerous? It's my decision, isn't it?
- What obligation does the NPS have regarding visitors' personal safety?

Audiences and Visitor Experience

Who comes to Little River Canyon National Preserve, and why? The size and number of entry points makes precise visitation figures difficult, but estimated visitation at the end of FY2017 (September 30, 2017) offers a vivid snapshot of the preserve's popularity. According to the best available data compiled by the preserve, this seemingly remote, rugged natural area drew 462,700 visits in 2016 and almost 400,000 in FY 2017. Based on previous years' annual estimates, this level of visitation is roughly double the annual figures estimated from 2005 (201,442 visits) to 2015 (248,135 visits).

A closer look at the 2017 figures shows that slightly more than half of these visits were recorded at the Falls Parking Lot, which overlooks Little River Falls, where intrepid visitors can hike down to swim at Little River Falls pool and Little Falls, the two most popular swimming holes. By contrast, only 28,571 visits were recorded at Canyon Mouth Park, a far safer and more accessible area for swimming. The Canyon Center received approximately 53,000 visits, including drop-ins, school groups, and other organized groups.

The huge increase in visitation at Little River over the past few years may be largely attributable to the site's inclusion in a number of online and travel media listings as one of the "best swimming holes" in the U.S., if not the world. In addition, the Alabama State Tourism division has promoted the preserve widely, both within the state and nationally, through such attention-getting devices as a climbing wall in New York City's Times Square.

The other undeniable factor in the high traffic at Little River Falls is that despite its feeling of remoteness, this extraordinary natural area lies within an easy drive of millions of people. The 13-county Chattanooga metropolitan statistical area (923,460 people), the Huntsville area (664,441 people), and the Birmingham metro area (1.3 million people) all lie within a 1.5-hour drive. Expand the drive to 2.5 hours, and Little River Canyon is within range of the 6.4 million people living in metropolitan Atlanta.

From an interpretive standpoint, the preserve logged some 93,700 visitor contacts in FY2017 through informal roving by the preserve's single interpretive ranger, a seasonal intern, and a handful of volunteers. Many of these contacts were probably safety messaging delivered at the falls. A total of 109 scheduled interpretive programs were presented (excluding educational programs), reaching 4,700 visitors. Taken together, these statistics indicate that approximately 24% of non-educational visitors had some personal contact with interpretive staff at the preserve in FY2017.

**Little River Canyon National Preserve Visitor Statistics
September 2017**

	This Month	Same Month Last Year	% Change	This Year YTD	Last Year YTD	% Change YTD	Fiscal YTD
Canyon Mouth Park	1,594	1,649	-3.3	25,565	25,829	-1.0	28,571
Falls Parking Lot	21,525	14,331	50.2	158,174	172,647	-8.4	203,093
Roving Contacts	10,653	6,884	54.8	75,976	73,751	3.0	93,714
Visitors at Canyon VC	3,928	3,273	20.0	32,809	29,759	10.2	53,331
Movie Viewers	1,325	1,200	10.4	10,020	9,825	2.0	16,752
Visitors Taking A Tour	6	0	0.0	24	0	0.0	24
Off-Site Programs	8	0	0.0	31	13	138.5	39
Off-Site Program Attendance	1,602	0	0.0	3,641	587	520.3	3,969
General Programs	8	26	-69.2	81	80	1.3	109
General Program Attendance	257	602	-57.3	1,784	1,641	8.7	4,730
Educational Programs	5	12	-58.3	26	60	-56.7	126
Educational Program Attendance	525	296	77.4	1,978	3,731	-47.0	7,332
Total Programs	21	38	-44.7	138	153	-9.8	206
Total Program Attendance	2,384	898	165.5	7,403	5,959	24.2	11,717
Total Recreation Visitors	37,150	28,951	28.3	320,107	384,895	-16.8	397,912

Source: <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats>

Audience Segments

Wherever they drive from, the visitors who come to Little River Canyon National Preserve represent many different categories of interests and demographics. They enjoy the preserve in many different ways.

The largest category by far consists of warm-weather visitors, mostly local or regional, who come to swim in Little River. These visitors typically arrive in small groups of friends and family. On a typical summer weekend, hundreds of visitors can be seen in the deep pools below Little River Falls and Little Falls. Some are children under age 18, but many seem to be young adults, aged 16 to 35 or so. Among these are a minority, mostly young and male, who exhibit what might be termed, at best, reckless behavior at the river's rocky promontories and waterfalls. (In the past, jumping off Little River Falls was a local tradition for some; however, the practice is no longer allowed.)

The preserve also attracts a steady roster of local and regional visitors who come to fish or hunt in permitted areas or to go horseback riding on designated backcountry trails.

School groups are another regular audience, with thousands of K-12 students from multiple counties attending programs in FY 2017.

Other local and regional visitors include thousands of autumn “leaf peepers,” primarily retirees, who view Little River Falls and drive Canyon Rim Road to see the brilliant fall foliage. The park is also popular with motorcyclists, both of the cruiser variety (large cycles carrying an older crowd, often couples), and the sport style (a favorite of younger riders who like to whip around the canyon curves at daredevil speeds). Both kinds of motorcycles generate high noise levels that impact other visitors’ experience of the canyon. Motorcycle incidents generate several emergency calls to the park each year.

Two other distinct categories of visitors use the canyon quite heavily: highly skilled and experienced rock climbers who scale the canyon’s extremely challenging cliffs, and highly skilled and experienced kayakers who brave the river’s world-class rapids. These two groups of visitors rarely interact with NPS staff, but it is clear from staff observations of vehicle license plates, web-based user groups, and occasional personal contacts that these visitors come from across the U.S., and that Little River Canyon is a well-known destination park for climbers and kayakers at high skill levels.

Visitor Experience Goals

Workshop participants identified the following visitor experience goals for the preserve.

Visitors to Little River Canyon National Preserve should have opportunities to:

- Enjoy unobstructed scenic views and unimpeded aural appreciation of the river and the canyon, including vistas, canyon depths, natural quiet, and river and wildlife sounds.
- Experience the awe-inspiring and perpetual power of water, both in the present and through the eons.
- Have fun engaging in personal choices among many active recreational pursuits in and along the canyon – including picnicking, hiking, climbing, using non-motorized watercraft, horseback riding, cycling, and swimming – in a safe, responsible, and courteous manner.
- Explore and learn about the preserve’s natural history, such as river ecology, distinctive ecosystems, geological features, and native plants and animals.
- Explore and learn about the preserve’s cultural history, including archeological findings from ancient human activity, the routes within the preserve and the larger context of the Trail of Tears, the contributions of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and other aspects of the area’s cultural history.

- Engage in legislatively mandated resource uses including hunting, fishing, and trapping, as permitted by law.
- Contribute to knowledge of the preserve through citizen science projects such as bird counts, water monitoring, iNaturalist, BioBlitzes, and other hands-on activities.
- Be inspired to become a steward of the canyon and its resources by volunteering, advocating for the preserve, and returning often.

Management Goals for Interpretation

Large recreational crowds and vast acreage presents unique challenges for interpretation at Little River Canyon National Preserve. At the same time, interpretation is one of the most powerful tools available to help the preserve manage and protect both the park and its visitors. Park management has identified the following goals for interpretation:

- Use interpretation as a way to help visitors enjoy the preserve safely and responsibly.
- Help visitors understand the power – and danger – of Little River.
- Educate visitors on sustainable use of the preserve, such as Leave No Trace ethics.
- Present a balanced program of natural and cultural resource interpretive programs that can engage visitors beyond their initial single-focus recreational use.
- Expand opportunities for programs that encourage safe recreational opportunities and behaviors.
- Inspire visitors to become more aware of their role as stewards of the preserve who can help protect it for future generations.
- Continue engaging in effective collaborative with the preserve's partners in providing interpretive and educational programming for Little River Canyon visitors.

Existing Conditions

Arrival

Visitors' arrival experience at Little River Canyon National Preserve may be a bit confusing. Entrance signs are minimal and awkwardly placed, in part because the preserve visitor center is located just outside the park boundary inside the Little River Canyon Center (www.canyoncenter.org), a facility owned by Jacksonville State University. This attractive LEED-certified building also houses the NPS headquarters for the preserve.

The Canyon Center has a visitor information desk staffed by NPS volunteers offering maps and personalized guidance on visiting the preserve, plus a well-stocked bookstore/gift shop, classrooms, a movie theater, an auditorium, and a library – in short, all the amenities of a park visitor center, with one exception: interpretive exhibits. The gallery space originally planned for exhibits has instead become the center's rental space to host revenue-generating events. As a result, when visitors arrive at the visitor center expecting to learn more about Little River Canyon National Preserve, they can talk with a volunteer and pick up an NPS brochure, but the only interpretive media on offer is a movie focused primarily on the Canyon Center and its role within Jacksonville State University's Environmental Policy and Information Center (EPIC) and Field Schools system. According to knowledgeable NPS staff members, the film also contains several inaccuracies about the preserve.

Personal Interpretation

Little River Canyon's sole professional interpreter has been in the position for more than two decades and has created an impressive range of personal programming through the years. (See attached list in Appendix C.) During periods of highest visitation, however, he is often tasked with visitor safety duties at Little River Falls and is unable to present interpretive programming.

Interpretive Media

Webpage

The preserve's NPS website contains essential information for planning a visit, as well as entries on cultural and natural history and the Junior Ranger program. Some pages have been updated as recently as January 2018, but others, such as the photo gallery, are blank. Entries consist almost entirely of text, with no photos, podcasts, or videos for download and few links for referral to other sites. Overall, the website needs significant updating.

Digital Media

Little River Canyon National Preserve has no digital media except the park webpage. A 21-minute film shown to preserve visitors at the Canyon Center was produced by Jacksonville State University and focuses primarily on the Canyon Center facility itself.

Many areas of the preserve have unreliable or no Wi-Fi or cell phone reception, making visitor use of digital media via smartphone unlikely unless visitors have downloaded materials before entering the preserve.

Social Media

As of mid-2018, the park Facebook page (www.facebook.com/lirinps) had more than 18,000 likes and followers. The park makes regular posts to the page with information about programs (Junior Ranger night skies), weather, and other updates. Visitors frequently post photos and reminiscences about time spent in the preserve.

Printed Materials

The preserve's NPS unigrid brochure was last updated in 2018 to reflect road changes and fee increases.

Site bulletins and/or information sheets include the following:

- Canoeing
- Kayaking
- Rock Climbing
- Geology
- Hiking Trails
- Horseback Riding

In addition to these publications, the preserve also offers four small printed checklists of wildlife species found here:

- Birds
- Mammals
- Fishes of the Little River
- Amphibians & Reptiles

A rack-card sized visitor survey card with a safety message – “Canyons Can Hurt” – is also available in English and Spanish.

Exterior Exhibits

The preserve has relatively few exterior kiosks and wayside exhibits, though most are in fair to good condition. More recent wayside panels and safety signs have texts in both English and Spanish.

- At Little River Falls, the most heavily used part of the park, an informational kiosk provides basic information about the preserve, and two upper-area wayside exhibits provide interpretation about the Trail of Tears and early settlement. Waysides on the viewing ramp down by the water carry interpretive safety messages.
- On Canyon Rim Drive, each pull-off overlook offers breath-taking views of the canyon, and five of the ten pull-offs have at least one wayside panel interpreting

some aspect of the preserve: rare plants, fossils, rock formations, the canyon through the seasons, and other relevant topics.

- Canyon Mouth Picnic Area has a safety kiosk with a tethered rescue life preserver, as well as a wayside panel on water quality.

Interior Exhibits

Little River Canyon National Preserve has no interior exhibits. Housed within the Canyon Center of JSU, the NPS park headquarters has no space of its own for exhibitry.

Issues and Influences affecting Interpretation

Visitor Safety

The most critical concern for the LIRI staff is visitor safety. The river above the falls is closed to visitors within 50 feet of the crest to prevent injuries and deaths from jumping off the falls, taking pictures over the cliffs, or being swept away over the falls.

Unfortunately, visitors continue to ignore warnings and often climb across railings and go past the posted safety signs. Swimming below the falls can also be extremely dangerous. Other favorite river spots are dangerous as well. Given the track record of deaths and injuries in the preserve, it is perfectly clear that no place in this wild, rocky river can ever be guaranteed as a “safe” venue for jumping (or falling) off a high rock into deep water, no matter how many generations of people have survived the experience in the past. The NPS and community rescue teams are called upon for major rescues an average of 15 times a year, many involving critical injuries; in the past ten years, at least 12 to 14 people have died in river-related incidents within LIRI (including 4 deaths in 2017). This tragic undercurrent profoundly affects employee morale, park operations, distribution of park personnel, county first-responder capacity, and much more. In practical terms, it means that at least 15 times a year, the 10-person LIRI staff must switch from normal operations into crisis mode, abandoning all other duties for at least a half-day or more. In-between those times, the one full-time NPS interpreter finds himself spending an inordinate amount of time policing the falls, with too little time left over to devote to actually interpreting the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of the preserve.

Limited Staff for Interpretation

The Little River Canyon National Preserve interpretive staff consists of one full-time permanent position: a lone interpretive ranger. With a visitor/interpreter ratio of 300,000:1, it is obvious that a vast percentage of visitors do not have the opportunity to enjoy personal interpretive services at the preserve. NPS interpretive staff limitations are offset somewhat by cooperative programming and pinch-hitting by educational and interpretive staff at the JSU Canyon Center and DeSoto Falls State Park, especially for school/curriculum-based programming; these very positive partner interactions are extremely helpful to the NPS and to the public. Still, the fundamental issue is that the solo NPS interpretive ranger spends a great deal of his interpretive time on visitor safety, leaving very little time (or visitor attention) for interpretation of the preserve’s dozens of other interpretive storylines, from the geology of the canyon to its water quality or its history of human habitation.

Recreational Capacity and Crowd Control

Little River Canyon’s longstanding popularity for swimming – by far the park’s most frequent use – presents the NPS with a dilemma. As a natural area with steep rocky cliffs and rushing water, the river is a hazardous, if beautiful, place to swim. In

response to the danger, the park de-emphasizes swimming, offers limited parking, and does not provide access or directions down to the water at either Little River Falls or the pool below Little Falls (the two most popular swimming holes). Yet thousands of people continue to flock to Little River National Preserve to swim. The river's popularity has been boosted over the past decade by numerous travel media sources listing it among "the best swimming holes" in the state, the nation, and even the world. As a result, the parking lots fill up and spill over, these two popular swimming holes reach a dangerous level of over-capacity several times each summer, and the park then closes all further access until the crowds diminish.

From a visitor standpoint, however, if the two highly touted swimming spots at Little River are unavailable, what else is there to do? For casual, non-expert visitors seeking active outdoor recreation opportunities, a brief walk on the falls viewing platform or a car ride along Canyon Rim Road are spectator-only experiences with little chance for physical activity. Yet there is only one hiking trail in the immediate vicinity, no ranger-led hikes, no opportunities to hire a ride on watercraft of any kind, no campgrounds, only one park-sanctioned swimming area (some distance away), and no park museum, interactive exhibits, or traditional visitor center experience.

The park has begun improvements at Canyon Mouth picnic area, the one park-approved swimming locale, to attract more visitors to this part of the preserve. This effort has been successful, although it is unclear whether the larger crowds now at Canyon Mouth are new visitors or people who originally aimed for Little River Falls or Martha's Falls but changed their destination.

Notably, neither the park's purpose and significance statements nor its primary themes acknowledge the public's overwhelming preference for swimming.

Partner Relationships

Jacksonville State University

Little River Canyon National Preserve is very fortunate to have a partnership with Jacksonville State University's Little River Canyon Center. The NPS preserve staff and operation are headquartered at the Canyon Center facility. NPS volunteers at the center's reception desk welcome preserve visitors, dispense brochures, and provide personalized directions and advice. The center's education director and the preserve's interpretive ranger collaborate regularly on educational programs for visiting school groups. The education director provides the NPS with classroom space and other assistance as needed.

Like any partnership, however, there are a few drawbacks. For example:

- Until mid-2018, the center was only open six hours a day (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. central time), which especially impacted visitors from adjacent Georgia

counties in the eastern time zone. In the summer of 2018, the Canyon Center front desk began opening at 8:00 a.m. and remaining open until 4:00 p.m.

- Lack of an outdoor orientation kiosk means that visitors who arrive when the center is closed are unable to access information.
- Staffing is primarily by volunteers, who bring varying levels of commitment and knowledge of the preserve and its offerings.
- The Canyon Center has no gallery or museum space where visitors can engage with interpretive exhibits, hear oral histories, or view artifacts or archival materials.
- The film that visitors see is a production of JSU focusing primarily on the Canyon Center facility, rather than on the natural or cultural history of the preserve.
- The Canyon Center charges fees for its programs and guided tours of the canyon. NPS programs are offered at no charge.

But perhaps the most important concern is simply that visitors may not find a clear, always-visible NPS presence in and around the Canyon Center. The lack of clear NPS branding impacts the preserve's identity as a site of national significance managed by the National Park Service. Another fundamental concern is the lack of communication, at a management and strategic planning level, between the preserve, as represented by the NPS, and the Canyon Center and its parent unit, the Environmental Policy and Information Center. Long-term plans for the Canyon Center call for an ambitious mix of dormitories for youth camps, a hotel, a restaurant, and other additions, which may impact the NPS's lease arrangement for office space at the center.

Alabama State Parks

The preserve also partners with DeSoto State Park, a 3,500-acre unit of Alabama State Parks that lies a few miles north of the Canyon Center but within the federally authorized boundary of the preserve. The state park encompasses another dramatic waterfall (DeSoto Falls) and offers hiking trails, campsites, cabins, and a lodge and restaurant.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

A short portion of Trail of Tears National Historic Trail known as the Removal Roundup Route runs through the preserve. At present, the preserve has at least one wayside exhibit highlighting Trail of Tears, as well as classroom programs available on request. In addition, the preserve offers interpretive materials and links to Trail of Tears NHT on its website and at the Canyon Center reception desk, and in the preserve unigrid brochure.

Finding More Friends

The Friends group for the preserve, originally a small group of retirees and park volunteers, seems to be in transition at present. The "Friends of the Preserve" listed and linked on the park webpage in 2018 has a broken link, and a Facebook page under

that name shows its last post as January 2017. More recent Friends activity is occurring under a different name, "Friends of Little River Canyon," with a one-page website at www.friendsoflittlerivercanyon.org, (listing the park interpretive ranger as the contact) and a Facebook page with the earlier "Friends of the Preserve" logo and recent posts under www.facebook.com/pg/friendsoflittlerivercanyon. Although the Friends group does have its 501(c)3 registration, no entries related to the group appear on various listings of registered 501(c)3 organizations in Alabama. During the planning workshop, the group discussed ways that preserve supporters might work with the Northeast Alabama Community Foundation to support the park.

PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations reflect discussions, findings, and dozens of thoughtful suggestions from stakeholders and preserve staff throughout the 2018 interpretive planning process. In reviewing this input, the planning team identified a number of interpretive opportunities that came to light in various ways. Among these were:

- Adding interpretation to various trails in the preserve
- Establishing several interpretive stations (in effect, mini-visitor contact stations) throughout the preserve to serve as focal points and consistent locations for interpretive activities
- Documenting the operational agreements for educational programming between the JSU Canyon Center and the NPS interpretive ranger
- Reexamining the interpretive role in safety messaging and enforcement
- Strengthening the preserve's relationships with its partners and friends

Pre-Arrival and Arrival Experience

- Use interpretive media and public outreach to educate and assist visitors in identifying and preparing for recreational opportunities before they arrive at LIRI. For example:
 - Reach out to local and regional tourism organizations to emphasize LIRI as a unique setting for specific outdoor experiences such as birding, hiking, bicycling, fishing, hunting, nature and landscape photography, geological discovery, dark skies, horseback riding, kayaking, and rock climbing.
 - As the workshop sessions revealed, even the preserve's most supportive and connected tourism partners were unaware of the extent of the NPS safety concerns regarding the dangers of swimming, cliff-jumping, and overcrowding in summer.
 - Prepare and do wide distribution of a checklist of basic safety and appropriate attire/supplies for the preserve's rough, rocky ground; dense vegetation with lots of insects; hours of heat and sunshine (sunscreen and water); and lack of reliable cell phone or 911 service for first-aid or rescue.
- Install a large outdoor kiosk with orientation and interpretation at a highly visible, high-traffic location outside the gates of the JSU Canyon Center for visitors who arrive when the Canyon Center is closed – perhaps at the entrance to the Little River Falls parking lot. (See page 23.)
- Seek to revive the draft commercial use plan (initially prepared and submitted to the NPS Southeast Regional Office in 2005) to provide watercraft and equestrian

concessionaire services. In the 13 years since this plan was submitted, LIRI visitation has more than doubled.

- Concessioners' contracts should have basic safety education written in as a requirement, with NPS-approved safety information delivered on-site via a required safety video, fitted floatation vests (personal floatation devices/PFDs), helmets, and other devices.
- With concessioners doing their own advertising and communication, visitors will have more chances to "get the message" about what is required for a safe and enjoyable recreational experience at the preserve.

Interpretive Sites and Facilities

- Establish several designated locations in the preserve to serve as permanent, high-visibility focal points for outdoor interpretive panels and for regularly scheduled interpretive activities such as ranger talks, gathering spots for guided hikes, visiting wildlife presentations, living history and crafter appearances, acoustic musical performances, fishing instructions and lure displays, and other attention-getting activities. These outdoor "mini visitor contact stations" could be placed strategically throughout the preserve in a variety of forms:
 - Reconfigure the existing interpretive installations at Little River Falls parking lot to provide an expanded, more visible NPS presence.
 - At a minimum, add a free-standing 24-hour informational kiosk out near the road, so visitors who arrive at the Canyon Center after hours (or who simply do not want to stop and go into a building) can get the information they need.
 - As time and funding allow, expand the existing pavilion into a larger, permanent mini-visitor contact station at this location. Such a change would dramatically increase the NPS presence, identity, and safety impact at Little River Falls, even as the JSU Canyon Center presence grows larger on the edge of the preserve.
 - Upgrade and equip a new pavilion or amphitheater in Canyon Mouth Park as a location for interpretation and digital programming, as well as a performance space for storytelling and music-making.
 - Add an interpretive playground at Canyon Mouth to entertain young visitors safely while also introducing them to thematic concepts that make Little River Canyon special.
 - Develop a portable cart-style interpretive kiosk to "rove" the preserve, setting up in designated, marked locations during peak visitation periods.
- Add engaging, interactive thematic interpretation, delivered in a variety of ways, along new and existing trails throughout the preserve. Ideally, these interpretive approaches will build upon and complement the JSU Canyon Center's established system of outdoor "learning stations" and employ a variety of different media, while

also meeting NPS standards for accessibility. (For more specific details, see Media Report: Appendix A.) For example:

- Canyon Center to Little River Falls: Interpret the unique Lookout Mountain topography, geology, and geography as this trail crosses under the highway bridge from Canyon Center to Little River Falls.
 - Add interpretive wayside learning stations at key points.
 - Develop bilingual, downloadable audio and printed tour guides to this route, with interest points keyed to numbered posts along the trail.
- Beaver Pond Trail: Interpret the mountaintop ecosystem and its flora and fauna, as revealed along the trail.
- Canyon Mouth Park Trail: Interpret the Little River itself: its watershed, water quality, how it carved the canyon, the aquatic life, fishing, and recreational uses.
- Eberhart Trail: Interpret the geology of Lookout Mountain and Little River Canyon and the effect of altitude on microclimates in the canyon.
- Backcountry: Interpret the now-vanished homesteads and communities at key road intersections, trailheads, and sites of interest.
 - Focus interpretation on homesteaders' daily lives, lifeways, and the small communities that once nestled here.
 - Test ways to provide interpretation in these areas without intruding on the backcountry landscape or endangering archeological sites.
 - Upload the recently developed PowerPoint program about these backcountry sites to the preserve website.
 - Complete and upload the proposed teacher guide for this cultural history aspect of the preserve.

Personal Interpretation

- Collect and document the content of existing programs developed by the preserve's longtime interpretive ranger (LIRI's first and only NPS interpreter since the founding of the unit).
 - Audio or video recording of live presentations, easily accomplished by cell phone, can provide audio for transcription, which can be preserved to assist future rangers in program preparation.
 - Plan and execute a formal oral history session with the preserve's longtime interpretive ranger before he retires.

- Seek out local and regional artisans, craftspeople, reenactors, living history practitioners, and tribal members for occasional interpretive programming and personal appearances within the preserve.
 - For best visibility and effectiveness, these guest interpreters should be positioned at high-traffic areas within the preserve rather than at the JSU Canyon Center.
- Secure additional oral histories by identifying appropriate individuals with knowledge and memories of earlier times along Little River, the founding of the preserve, lifeways of former inhabitants, and similar insights; schedule and gather these oral histories as soon as possible.
- Develop a program to recruit and qualify selected volunteers to provide personal interpretation meeting NPS standards in fields reflecting their particular interests.
 - Qualification requirements should include several useful but not overwhelming steps, such as (1) completing the Eppley Institute's free online course on basic interpretation and interpretive skills; (2) shadowing the preserve's interpretive ranger for a few sessions of personal programming; (3) preparing an outline of two proposed programs; and (4) delivering each proposed program at least once in the presence of a preserve ranger.

Non-Personal Interpretation/Interpretive Media

Digital media

- Prioritize improving the functionality of the preserve's NPS webpage so it can be more broadly used in mission-critical messaging as well as broad multimedia, multi-faceted interpretation. (The planning team recognizes that this issue is largely outside the realm of the LIRI interpretive staff. However, a high-functioning website is an absolutely critical part of this relatively new, high-use, minimally staffed park's safety messaging, identity, and interpretive effectiveness.)
- Explore ways to gain technical help from other regional NPS units.
- Continue to plan and develop new digital content – a process that can proceed independently, with content used in a variety of ways – while web functionality is being fully optimized. Ideally, content that is “upload ready” can be a catalyst for spurring continuous website improvement. Among the upload-ready content to be created – and used in the interim as paper handouts – are:
 - A driving guide
 - Temporary digital exhibits
 - Arrival info
 - Safety checklists and precautions
 - Phenology logs for bird sightings and other wildlife
 - Teachers' lesson plans

- A series of new site bulletins on thematic topics (see Print Publications at page 27)
- Start a photo bank of high-resolution, downloadable, public domain images for use by the preserve, partners, media, and the general public.
 - Post a selection of these photos online.
 - Curate the bulk of the collection on an NPS drive where it can be accessed over time.
- Schedule regular work sessions and milestones for the website to ensure continued momentum toward a fully functional, dynamic website.
 - Assign preserve staff members specific content contributions based on their areas of expertise.
- As the website is improved, it is essential that all new and existing text be written in a user-friendly, interpretive style and proofread with careful attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and the NPS Editorial Style Guide. While a clean writing style may seem of minor concern to some, the LIRI website is many visitors' first impression of the park and represents the entirety of the National Park Service. Every written paragraph, no matter how short, should earn an A+.
 - If necessary, hire an editor/writer – perhaps a local English teacher or journalist – or find a qualified volunteer such as a retired teacher to convert text by experts into user-friendly interpretive prose and to proofread all copy.
 - A \$1,000 to \$2,000 stipend from the Friends of the Preserve could possibly help fund this need.
- Commission a new 15- to 20-minute film about Little River Canyon National Preserve.
 - With careful planning, such a film can be structured in content modules that can be sectioned out and used as short videos on YouTube and the preserve website.
- Commission a short, high-impact professional film for the website and YouTube emphasizing river safety and the dangers of Little River Falls. This film should be especially hard-hitting about daredevil behavior and emphasize the remoteness and difficulty of being rescued (unlike Extreme Sports on television, where ambulances are standing by!).

Social Media

- Continue to maintain and experiment with the most effective ways to engage audiences through the NPS Facebook page.
 - Begin scheduling twice-weekly activities or entries on the preserve Facebook page, with at least one being a user-response entry: name this species, identify this site, send your best shot of this area, or similar activities.

- Stage monthly or quarterly photo contests on the Facebook page, and reward the winners by using their photo as the Facebook banner photo for the month.
- Ask/assign other preserve supporters, volunteers, and staff to make regular contributions to the Facebook page, preferably with photographs and very short texts.
- Monitor and respond regularly to Facebook visitors' posts.
- Monitor and respond regularly to non-NPS, non-Facebook online mentions of LIRI on social media sites such as Yelp, TripAdvisor, and others. These responses should be positive and upbeat in tone, but also serve as correctives for the occasional misinformation or negative reviews.

Print Publications

- Create and distribute a new rack card for the preserve. (Rack cards are designed for wide, off-park distribution entities such as local and regional visitor centers, interstate welcome centers, and other recreational sites in the region.)
- Schedule the next update for the NPS unigrid folder, which was most recently reprinted in 2018. If desired, work with the Friends of the Preserve to determine ways to help local partners finance additional copies of the brochure for use in local tourism promotion.
- Update existing information sheets and site bulletins as needed, and determine accessibility requirements for uploading these materials to the website.
- Create detailed trail maps for all trails within the preserve. Prepare them first as printed handouts and then determine accessibility requirements for uploading them to the website. Using simple icons and graphics, include pertinent "trailhead"-style information for each trail on its map: overall difficulty, length, elevation change (grade), surface type and tread width if applicable, stairs or steps, and approximate walking time. At a minimum, these maps should include the following trails:
 - Trail from Canyon Center to Little River Falls
 - Beaver Pond Trail (off Highway 176)
 - Canyon Mouth Park hiking trail
 - Eberhart Point Trail, Powell Trail, DeSoto Scout Trail, Lower Two-Mile Trail, and Little Falls Trail
- Develop new site bulletins that illustrate all seven interpretive themes. Building on the interpretive ranger's extensive range of live programming on these and related topics, these written site bulletins should be researched and created first as print handouts, and then adapted to meet accessibility requirements for uploading to the

website. The addition of these possible topics and storylines will address themes not addressed in existing site bulletins and handouts (except the unigrid) at present:

- Archeology in the canyon, including artifacts and human history here (without identifying specific sites)
- Stories of the early homesteaders in the backcountry; what/whom the surviving road names evoke.
- Ecosystems in and around the canyon, including plant and animal communities, micro-climates, and protected species.
- Aquatic ecosystems and water quality in the Little River
- Safety in the great outdoors

Exterior Exhibits

As noted earlier, this plan calls for creating several distinct focal points throughout the preserve where interpretation can occur. These focal points may include exterior exhibit panels of various shapes and sizes integrated into outdoor kiosks and pavilion structures (at Little River Falls and Canyon Mouth) or installed as vertical sets or waysides. (These options are discussed in more detail in Appendix A: Media Report.)

- Compile a simple, informal inhouse inventory of existing exterior exhibits, including waysides and information kiosks, throughout the preserve. This inventory will not only be helpful in creating new signs; it will provide valuable “institutional memory” documentation of images and baseline research for future interpretive programming.
 - The easiest way to accomplish this is simply to take photos of each installation with a camera/GPS app that records GPS coordinates for each location, and then store these images on an accessible NPS drive so they can be retrieved through the years as needed.
- Request funding (PMIS) for a comprehensive wayside plan through the NPS Harpers Ferry Center, with the goal of replacing all exterior exhibits throughout the preserve within the next 10 to 15 years. (See Appendix A: Media Report.)
 - New panels are needed to replace the bulk of the preserve’s exterior exhibitry, which generally dates from 20 years ago, soon after the preserve was founded. Attractive, consistently designed waysides across the length and breadth of the preserve will greatly improve its image and identity, both among visitors and locals, as a unit of the National Park Service. Modern waysides with audio descriptions, tactiles, and other interactive elements will be better equipped to engage more diverse audiences, including people with disabilities, young visitors, or visitors for whom English is a second language. A comprehensive wayside plan will also address concerns about interpretive gaps in covering certain themes and locations, as well as gaps in contemporary perspectives and research.
 - At a minimum, the comprehensive wayside plan should result in:
 - new thematic waysides at each overlook along Canyon Rim Scenic Drive;

- new informational and interpretive panels at Little River Falls parking lot and viewing platform;
- new interpretive panels, preferably as part of multifaceted “learning stations,” on the trail between the Canyon Center and the falls;
- new informational and interpretive panels at Canyon Mouth Park;
- additional waysides on other trails as funding becomes available.
- For more details on recommended content, see the Media Report (Appendix A).
- Develop a series of inexpensive, temporary panels focused on safety for use at Little River Falls and other high-risk areas of the preserve during the busy summer season.
 - These panels should be changed out and rotated frequently, so they will continue to be noticed by regular visitors.

Interior Exhibits

- Revisit the NPS’s concern regarding space in the Canyon Center complex for interpretive exhibits, which may become more feasible as the center’s proposed expansion goes forward.
 - Should the exhibit space become available, one approach would be to fund exhibits through the Friends of the Preserve.
- Create several portable exhibits for use in partner sites, at festivals and community events, in schools, and other settings throughout the region. Each of these exhibits should have a distinct focus; if necessary, exhibits can be duplicated at relatively low cost. Sample topics or focus areas include:
 - An overview of the preserve overview/introductory/orientation exhibit
 - LIRI’s unique ecology: plant and animal communities, what makes this environment so special and unusual
 - LIRI’s year-round recreational opportunities (including safety messaging)
 - LIRI’s scenic drives and trails (hiking, cycling, equestrian)
- Each portable exhibit can have its own “traveling trunk” of props: a selection of small tactiles, reproduction artifacts, hands-on activities and handouts to be used in table-top settings as appropriate.

Youth and Education Programming

Youth Programming

- Integrate and take advantage of the multitude of online programs and apps to help the LIRI interpretive team conduct relevant youth and educational activities.
 - Continue the use of the iNaturalist app and seek ways to expand and capitalize on data obtained by this widely used app, such as the annual BioBlitz in the preserve.

- Use the Clean Swell app to plan, promote, and log litter collection during regularly scheduled clean-ups in the preserve.
 - Engage participants from numerous user groups (kayakers, climbers, cyclists, equestrians, hunters, anglers, students).
 - Publicize the event widely, both locally and regionally, with partners, schools, user groups, and other stakeholders.
 - The Clean Swell app allows participants to log and compete on how much litter they collect, such as the number of plastic bottles, aluminum cans, or cigarette butts.
- Develop a beginner-level kayaking program with skills training and equipment provided on a less demanding and relatively safer portion of the river.
 - Among the options for creating such a program are collaborating with a local or regional kayaking organization or contracting with a qualified concessioner.
- Revise the Junior Ranger booklet as needed and make it consistently available at the Canyon Center, as well as at Canyon Mouth when the pavilion there is staffed.
 - Explore collaborative use of the Junior Ranger booklet and activities with DeSoto State Park.
- Identify and obtain a selection of other service-wide Junior Ranger booklets that are relevant to Little River, such as booklets on archeology, night skies, what's underwater (which features both rivers and oceans), and a CD called Songs for Junior Rangers.

Curriculum-based Programming

- Document the existing operational procedures for curriculum-based programming between JSU and NPS in writing, so as to preserve and sustain the various entities' understandings regarding the "division of labor" among grade levels, schools, and subject areas, even as staff members change.
 - Clarify the NPS's role in providing free programming for all schools and all grade levels, with an informal agreement to focus primarily on all fourth-grade classes (per a servicewide NPS program), as well as Title I schools (with school bus stipends provided through the Friends of the Preserve).
 - Clarify the Canyon Center's role in offering fee-based programming for specific, pre-arranged school visits.
 - Clarify the DeSoto State Park's role in providing curriculum-based programming regarding the preserve.
- Post teacher guides and curricula for NPS-provided educational programming on the preserve website for download.

- Reevaluate curricula as needed for adherence to Alabama State Department of Education standards.
 - Seek assistance as needed from educator groups such as the Alabama Science Teachers Association.
- Continue the focus on training teachers to conduct their own guided programs for classes visiting the preserve.
- Explore ways to provide more college-level learning opportunities in the preserve. (See Partnerships, p. 32.)

Staffing and Volunteers

One critical aspect of staffing at LIRI is that the one full-time interpretive ranger spends much of his time in the summer policing and deterring illegal activities at Little River Falls. With clear and respectful recognition of the demands and workload of everyone on the small LIRI staff, this plan recommends the following regarding a uniformed presence at the falls during peak hours:

- Peak-hour policing of visitor behavior at the falls should be handled entirely by park law enforcement, not by the interpretive ranger and desk volunteers at the Canyon Center. Policing visitor behavior is not an interpreter's function; a professional interpreter should be providing interpretation, one of the most valuable tools the NPS has to win visitors' hearts and minds.
 - Every half-hour a professional interpreter spends policing is a half-hour that deprives other visitors of skilled, engaging interpretation.
 - Visitors who climb over the fence to the falls or behave carelessly in the pool below are willfully endangering themselves and others. A clear but generally present Law Enforcement staff – and the occasional citation, perhaps even a “sweep” to start each season – is the only logical answer to each summer's inevitable tragedies.
 - LIRI should explore all feasible avenues to obtain enough law enforcement presence to cover the falls for the bulk of the summer's highest use periods.
 - To date, the mere presence of a uniformed interpreter has been an effective deterrent without weapons or other law enforcement trappings; given this history, assignment at the falls may not require regulation NPS law enforcement officers. However, personnel assigned to the falls should be perceived as and report to law enforcement.
 - Freeing the interpretive ranger from safety patrol at the falls opens up far more interpretive opportunities, as well as general oversight, volunteer supervision, and content development time, for interpretation.

Additional staffing recommendations include these steps:

- Seek an additional full-time position for a second interpretive ranger, preferably someone with expertise in digital and social media and also fluent in Spanish.
 - With more than 400,000 visitors a year, LIRI cannot expect to meet visitors' interpretive needs with only one interpretive ranger.
- Continue to recruit and add interns and seasonal employees to the full extent possible, with specific strategic goals such as working with visitors whose first language is Spanish.
- Seek a Pathways intern specifically for interpretation.
- Expand recruitment efforts for volunteers specifically capable of and interested in providing interpretive programming.
- Encourage all volunteers, including those operating the front desk, to complete the free online Eppley Institute basic course for volunteer interpreters.
- Explore ways to obtain help from off-site NPS visual information, webmaster, or other media specialists as needed.
- Offer opportunities to interpreters and aspiring interpreters, including volunteers and interns, for additional training and professional development through regional workshops, special interest conferences, and other professional outreach in individuals' special fields of interest.

Partnerships

Jacksonville State University

At present, LIRI has an operational partnership, as well as a landlord/tenant relationship, with the JSU Canyon Center, a unit of the JSU Environmental Policy and Information Center (EPIC) and Field Schools. During this planning process, however, it became clear that the Jacksonville State University/NPS partnership has the potential to extend beyond the day-to-day operations of the Canyon Center. Future expansion of the Canyon Center, with the addition of dormitory space, will facilitate many more on-site research and service learning opportunities at LIRI for JSU students and faculty.

- Explore service learning and research liaisons with other academic departments at Jacksonville State University.
 - These opportunities could apply to students pursuing work experience and/or degrees in biology, communications, education, history, law enforcement, public administration, and other fields, as well as those participating in unique programs such as the Archeology Resource Laboratory in the department of geoscience.
- Building on the LIRI relationship with JSU, explore service learning and research liaisons with other public higher-education institutions in Alabama.

DeSoto State Park/Alabama State Parks

Located about 10 miles north of Little River Falls, this CCC-era state park is located within the boundary of Little River Canyon National Preserve. However, visitors to Little River Falls and the Canyon Center may not discover this park and its range of activities (including food and lodging) without guidance.

- Continue cross-promoting events and activities between LIRI and DeSoto State Park.
- Cross-promote concessioners with DeSoto State Park offering horseback riding and kayaking (www.alapark.com/kayaking-canoeing), as long as LIRI does not have these concessions.
- Provide handouts of DeSoto State Park activities at the Canyon Center information desk.

Other Partners

- Develop a regular yearly schedule of targeted work projects and activities to engage other current and potential preserve partners.
 - Build up existing relationships by staging at least two partner-oriented events per year, such as a spring clean-up or a fall fun run.
 - These events should be sponsored by LIRI, with the JSU Canyon Center as a partner rather than host.

APPENDIX A: MEDIA REPORT

With limited staffing, high visitation, and a large land area, Little River Canyon National Preserve can benefit greatly from a fresh look at ways to use interpretive media to help serve its visitors. In the absence of a conventional visitor center on the site, the preserve has a small assortment of wayside exhibits and information kiosks, a unigrid brochure, and several fact sheets/site bulletins, but essentially no other interpretive media. The unusual shared-space headquarters and visitor center arrangement with the JSU Canyon Center– as well as its remote location with minimal cell and Wi-Fi service – has severely limited LIRI’s capacity regarding interpretive media: There are no interior exhibits, no digital media or cloud-based media beyond an NPS website, minimal social media presence, and no film or video devoted exclusively to the preserve.

Accordingly, the 2018 long-range interpretive plan makes recommendations for a variety of interpretive media, from digital to print to outdoor exhibitry. At LIRI, a revamping of the use of exterior exhibits can address numerous interpretive gaps and enrich visitors’ enjoyment of the preserve. Done well, wayside and other exterior exhibits can present short, accurate, engaging stories that speak to diverse visitors without inappropriate intrusion on a historical, cultural, or natural landscape.

The following Media Report focuses on waysides and other exterior interpretive exhibits for LIRI and recommends further planning and implementation through a comprehensive wayside exhibit plan. In making these recommendations, the planning team wayside exhibit specialist drew on observations from planning workshop participants, guidance published in the NPS Harpers Ferry Center Wayside Guide, personal field experience, and the unique circumstances of Little River Canyon National Preserve regarding its identity and limited interpretive presence across a long expanse of undeveloped, remote lands. While the planning team recognizes that wayside exhibits are best avoided in undeveloped natural areas, in this instance there are compelling interpretive and management reasons to use them. As the Harpers Ferry Center wayside exhibits guide points out, “In addition to their role in interpretation, waysides can serve more practical purposes.... They can also help protect park resources by establishing an official presence at remote, unstaffed locations. The simple presence of a wayside exhibit can sometimes be an effective resource protection tool.”

JSU Canyon Center Entrance and Little River Falls

Although the LIRI headquarters are located in the Jacksonville State University's Canyon Center, which functions as the preserve's visitor contact station, the center is not an NPS property, which poses some dilemmas for visitor access. The center (staffed entirely by volunteers) has historically been open only six hours a day (10:00 to 4:00 CST), although its opening time has recently changed to 8:00 a.m. When the facility's front desk is closed, the gate on the long driveway leading into the property is locked, and the center is not visible from the road. Visitors arriving before or after hours (such as morning visitors from the nearby Eastern time zone) have been unable to access the visitor center or an NPS outdoor kiosk/information center on the property. In addition, it is worth noting that not all visitors want a personal encounter when seeking information; they simply want to orient themselves and move on. Putting an outdoor kiosk directly outside the center building would serve no purpose, since the driveway gate is locked when the building is closed. Putting an outdoor kiosk at the gate entrance on Highway 35 would require pull-off and/or turnaround space.

One relatively simple solution is to expand the existing visitor information installations at the Little River Falls parking lot (about a half-mile past the Canyon Center) to create (1) a free-standing 24-hour informational kiosk near the road, outside any proposed/future parking fee area, and (2) a large, reconfigured, permanent mini-visitor contact station under the existing pavilion roof in this location. Depending on the future relationship with JSU and the Canyon Center – which has plans for a major expansion – an independent NPS visitor contact station at the Little River Falls parking lot may become a significantly more important part of NPS visitor services and LIRI identity through the years.

- A Canyon Center gate sign directing visitors to the self-service contact station could be installed to fall into place automatically when the Canyon Center gate is locked.
- At a minimum, the roadside 24-hour installation should be a multi-sided, multimedia kiosk with orientation details, maps, and brochure dispensers; a changeable section for posting announcements and events; and several interpretive panels addressing major themes of the preserve.
 - At the pavilion at the falls entrance, a large weather- and vandal-resistant topographical map would be a useful focal point and attract attention to this visitor contact installation.



Target audience: All visitors, all demographics. In all likelihood, almost every new or occasional visitor to Little River Canyon National Preserve stops by to view the main falls, making this spot a prime location for preserve-wide orientation.

Thematic connections: To the extent possible, this installation – like the unigrid brochure – should touch on all seven themes of the preserve and the many recreational activities available here.

Media elements:

- Interpretive panels with large, compelling photographs and text in English and Spanish
- Audio descriptions and audio storytelling (oral histories, music)
- Tactile details, such as leaf shapes, rock surfaces, turtle shells
- Low-tech hands-on interactives
- Printed materials in protected brochure dispenser
- A large, freestanding weather- and vandal-resistant tactile topographical map

Architectural elements:

- A roof and/or slatted shade shelter
- A stage-like space for storytelling, music-making, craftspeople and artisans, and visitor engagement
- Some form of reception desk (perhaps portable) for interpretive, volunteer, and law enforcement staff
- Reliable Wi-Fi or other instant communications capability for emergencies

Little River Falls (Main Falls Viewing Platform)

The most popular and crowded visitation area in the preserve, the Little River Falls site presents particularly challenging conditions for interpretation. While many cool-weather visitors do come simply to view the falls, most summertime visitors come expecting to swim. Yet the falls themselves, and the pool below, are exceedingly dangerous, and the NPS does not recognize this (or any other) spot in Little River as a designated swimming area. No lifeguards are on duty, and the only enforcement (or deterrent) is the occasional presence of a uniformed ranger or volunteer.

Target audiences: Visitors who intend to swim – typically young adults or families with teenagers.

Thematic connections: Visitor Safety

Media Elements:

- Temporary panels that are rotated throughout the busy summer season

- Panel text and graphics should be simple and impactful. Tone may vary from blunt to humorous or satirical, using approaches aimed at the families, friends, and individuals in the young male demographic considered most at-risk for dangerous behaviors. For example:
 - Don't Die Here!
 - Stop! Don't Be Stupid!
 - How to Lose \$280 (showing someone getting a fine)
 - Smile for the Camera (for a dummy video installation)
- Two permanent panels interpreting the river and the canyon

Little Falls

Since the parking lot closest to Little Falls (formerly known as Martha's Falls) has recently been closed to the public and repurposed for emergency vehicle use only, no interpretive media installations are recommended for this location at this time.

As a temporary installation for the summer season, the preserve might consider a temporary wayside or kiosk/upright panel with a strong safety message. This panel can highlight the high rate of rescue operations needed at Little River, while informing the public of the critical need to convert this lot for emergency vehicles only.

Canyon Mouth Park

A pending renovation of the bathrooms and pavilion at Canyon Mouth offers the LIRI staff an opening to integrate a range of interpretive opportunities into the remodeled facility, as well as along the Canyon Mouth riverside trail.

Target audiences: Multigenerational family groups, many of whom are Latino, who come to spend the day picnicking and swimming.

Thematic Connections: Interpretive panels at Canyon Mouth should focus primarily on making visitors feel welcome (and aware of river safety) as they enjoy a day of family recreation. Secondary thematic connections relate to Little River, its water quality, and its role in carving the canyon; the unique geology and other physical features of the canyon itself; and the plant and animal communities found here.

Elements:

Outside the fee gate:

- A 24-hour-access multi-sided, multimedia kiosk with orientation details, maps, and brochure dispensers; a changeable section for announcements and events; and several interpretive panels addressing major themes of the preserve.

Inside the fee area:

- Interpretive panels or an interpretive mural on the interior wall of pavilion, with large, compelling photographs and text in English and Spanish
- Audio descriptions and audio storytelling stations (oral histories, music)
- Tactile details such as leaf shapes, rock surfaces, and turtle shells on reader rails
- Low-tech hands-on interactives
- Printed materials in protected brochure dispenser
- A large, freestanding weather- and vandal-resistant tactile topographical map
- Interpretive panels within the restrooms
- A trailhead vertical panel and two to four wayside exhibits interpreting the riverside hiking trail
- An interpretive station with panels and low-tech interactives in the picnic area near the (proposed) new interpretive playground.



Trails in the Preserve

All Trails:

- Install standardized information panels at all trailheads to inform visitors about accessibility: trail surface, length, grade, tread width, etc.

Canyon Center to Little River Falls (under the bridge):

- Add interpretive wayside learning stations to make this a universally accessible interpretive trail. Ideally, the waysides will have not only the required audio description for visually impaired visitors, but will have universally accessible features including audio, visuals, tactile elements, and interactivity (such as viewing scopes) that will appeal to a wide range of visitors, including children.
 - Tactile elements (a leaf pattern, a beaver tail, a snake's trail) on this easy, nearby trail might also be appealing for rubbings or tracings; children can gather supplies at a trailhead station. As shown above, tactile elements can be freestanding or integrated into wayside panels.
- Develop bilingual, downloadable audio and printed tour guides to this route, with interest points keyed to numbered posts along the trail.

Beaver Pond Trail:

- Install three to five wayside exhibits along the trail to interpret aspects of the forest (perhaps the canopy, midstory, and forest floor), some of the more common mammals and birdlife here, and the unique mountaintop ecosystem.

Canyon Mouth Park Trail:

- Install three to five wayside exhibits along the trail to interpret the river and its canyon: the watershed, water quality, how the river carved the canyon, aquatic life, fishing, and recreational uses.
 - These waysides should be bilingual in Spanish and English.

Eberhart Trail:

- Create two interpretive waysides for placement near the trailhead panel at the top of the trail – one on geology and the other on the canyon microclimates and ecosystems on the descent and on the canyon floor. This interpretation will serve both hikers and visitors who come to look at the view from the canyon rim.
 - Given the undisturbed landscape, the vertical drop, and the difficulty of this trail, no waysides on the trail itself are recommended.

Backcountry:

- At a minimum, the more popular and accessible backcountry roads should have simple trailhead signs.
- Test ways to provide interpretation of this area's cultural heritage using non-intrusive, appropriate, compliant strategies.

Canyon Rim Scenic Drive (Highway 176)

Target audiences: "Leaf Peepers" on scenic drives in the fall, predominantly older adults, but also including multigenerational family groups and some young children; landscape and nature photographers; "selfie" photographers; birders; visitors with an interest in geology; school and youth groups; "accidental tourists" on their way elsewhere.

Thematic connections: Waysides along the canyon rim should interpret aspects of at least six of the preserve's seven interpretive theme topics: the canyon, the river, plant and animal communities, recreation, and safety. In many cases, the name of the overlook itself is a good guide for an effective interpretive focus. For example:

- Little River Falls Overlook offers a good view for interpreting the river itself and the power of water to erode landscapes and carve canyons.
- Lynn Overlook is set on a rocky glade, an unusual habitat with distinctive wildlife and at least eight rare plant species. (An existing wayside discusses these but is showing its age.)

- Hawks Glide Overlook is a good point for interpreting canyon wildlife, including raptors and the food chain that supports them.
- Grace's High Falls has a large viewing platform with seating, so visitors can see the 133-foot seasonal falls on the other side of the canyon. An existing wayside interprets this unusual high-elevation mountaintop falls.
- Eberhart Point Overlook, with its remnants of early Canyonland Park, is a good place to interpret the history of the preserve.
 - This overlook should also have a trailhead sign or kiosk for Eberhart Trail, a strenuous hike to the bottom of the canyon.

Elements:

- Wayside exhibits for each of the overlook pull-offs along Canyon Rim Drive, including:
 - Vertical panel orientation/interpretation/safety installations at the beginning and the end of the route, placed to the side without obstructing the views (similar to new orientation panels recommended at Little River Falls parking lot and at Canyon Mouth)
 - Viewing scopes at several overlooks for close-up views of the canyon depths, vegetation, rock layers and formations, and wildlife
 - Tactile inserts of fossils and surfaces of different rock types that appear in the canyon
 - Several longer reader-rail-style waysides showing a panoramic vista of the landscape for interpreting the far cliffs, the vertical layers of the canyon, and recognizable landmarks on the landscape
 - Audio descriptions for accessibility, and other audio offerings as desired, such as oral history recollections, wildlife sounds, and period music



LIRI Proposed Exterior Interpretive Media: Thematic Matrix

Theme	Trail from Canyon Center to Falls	Falls Parking Lot	Little Falls/ Marthas Falls	Canyon Mouth Park	Beaver Pond Trail	Eberhart Trail	Canyon Rim Scenic Drive (AL-176)	Back-country
The Canyon	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Little River	X	X	X	X			X	X
Recreation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Plants and Animals	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Cultural Resources		X		X		X		X
Backcountry		X		X				X
Visitor Safety	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

This chart summarizes the proposed use of exterior exhibits to expand interpretation of the preserve's seven interpretive themes. Viewed as a gap analysis, the chart shows strong coverage of most themes, especially with the addition of more prominent orientation installations at Little River Falls parking lot and at Canyon Mouth, both outside and within the fee zone. As might be expected, the theme relating to the backcountry shows the fewest entries, in order to avoid intrusion into visitors' backcountry experience. However, the preserve expressed interest in testing various unobtrusive ways to provide interpretation of the backcountry, especially its cultural resources. The addition of trailhead panels at each trailhead, including selected roads in the backcountry, will also provide a basic level of interpretation and NPS identity across the entire preserve.

A Wayside Check List

In developing effective waysides, ask several basic questions first.

- Is there a lasting view or landscape beyond the sign that needs interpreting? Don't install a wayside exhibit if there's nothing compelling to see, no thematic connection, a rapidly changing environment, or little to say that will enlighten or intrigue visitors about the scene.
- Is the site safe from oncoming traffic and accessible for wheelchair users? Does it require a vehicle pull-off to meet these conditions? (Since road pull-offs usually involve the DOT, the time frame can be years.)
- Will a wayside exhibit intrude upon the integrity of visitors' experience with the cultural, historic, or natural landscape? Can careful placement minimize such intrusion while offering valuable interpretation?

- Is another interpretive medium a better alternative for delivering similar messaging in a comparable or more compelling way? Is the alternate medium practical and sustainable?
- Perhaps the biggest virtue of wayside exhibits is their “passive” nature: once installed, they are always available and last for years with no maintenance except occasional cleaning with a damp cloth.

Wayside Content and Writing Style

- Keep the content simple and focused on a single topic. A wayside exhibit is not the place to tell complex, multi-faceted stories.
- Choose topics that clearly benefit from interpretation; if people understand what they're seeing without words, there is no need for a wayside. Do not use waysides to restate common knowledge or give obvious surface descriptions of what people see in front of them.
- The NPS Wayside Exhibit Guide advises writing text that can be read in its entirety by an average reader in about 45 seconds.
- A standard 36"x24" low-profile (slanted) wayside sign will hold about 150 words in an easy-to-read type size before it begins to look crowded.
- Aim for a reading level of about 6th-grade level, as measured by the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Levels tracker in Microsoft Word.
- Use active voice, short sentences, and everyday language. Resist pressure from the various “-ologists” (biologists, geologists, archeologists, anthropologists) to use the technical jargon of their fields.

Wayside Imagery and Graphic Design

- In wayside exhibits, a picture is worth a thousand words – but it must be the right picture! Wayside exhibit images should reveal something for visitors that they cannot get otherwise.
- Graphic design is a matter of personal preference, but in general, wayside exhibit design should look more like a billboard or a travel magazine advertisement than like a page in a book. A text-heavy, rigid design with small images is usually too “bookish” for casual visitors strolling by. After all, most visitors to a park, even for a day trip, are on vacation. (Professional graphic designers can consult the Harpers Ferry Center grid system and other specs for NPS-approved wayside design.)
- Avoid QR codes, or if they are used, hide them in an image so they will not clutter the panel with unsightly code diagrams that do not contribute to visual storytelling and may quickly become damaged and obsolete.

Interpretive Media References and Resources

Harpers Ferry Center Resources

In wayside sign development, the primary reference is the NPS Harpers Ferry Center Wayside Guide, available for download at

www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/waysides/Wayside-Guide-First-Edition.pdf. (For quick access and photographs, see excerpts from this guide at www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides.)

The HFC comprehensive guide has sections with step-by-step advice on the wayside exhibit planning and development process, as well as useful entries such as “Common Pitfalls in Wayside Writing” and “Common Pitfalls in Wayside Design,” how to create maps for wayside exhibits (larger and simpler than other maps, because they are stationary), tips for adding tactile elements to wayside exhibits, and examples of compelling versus ordinary wayside exhibits. Several particularly useful links are:

<https://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/way-process-planning.cfm>

<https://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/way-process-access.cfm>

<https://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/features/2013/audioDescription/>

Locally Owned Design Fabrication Firms

Although professional interpretive exhibit design/fabrication firms and exhibit designers typically work nationwide, Alabama has the unusual distinction of having two locally owned full-service design/fabrication firms, both well-established nationally in the field of interpretation (30+ years), within an easy drive of Little River Canyon National Preserve. A consultation and visit to the inhouse fabrication workshops of either of these firms could be of great benefit in helping the LIRI staff visualize the possibilities for exterior interpretive media in the preserve. Both companies offer a variety of pre-designed/off-the-shelf outdoor installations as well as full capabilities for custom designs.

- Design Display Inc. (<http://designdisplay.com/about>), located in Birmingham, is a GSA contract holder with a long track record in both permanent interpretive exhibits and temporary/trade show exhibits.
Owner: Eric and Tammy Colee
- Southern Custom Exhibits (www.southerncustomexhibits.com), located in Anniston, holds an NPS Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract for exhibit fabrication and has worked with Harpers Ferry Center since 1993.
Owner: Greg Morrow

APPENDIX B: LEGISLATION

PUBLIC LAW 102-427—OCT. 21, 1992

106 STAT. 2179

Public Law 102-427
102d Congress

An Act

To establish the Little River Canyon National Preserve in the State of Alabama.

Oct. 21, 1992

[H.R. 3665]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Little River Canyon National Preserve Act of 1992".

Little River
Canyon
National
Preserve Act of
1992.
Conservation.
16 USC 698q
note.
16 USC 698q.

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In order to protect and preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources of the Little River Canyon area in DeKalb and Cherokee Counties, Alabama, and to provide for the protection and public enjoyment of the resources, there is established the Little River Canyon National Preserve (referred to in this Act as the "Preserve").

(b) AREA INCLUDED.—The Preserve shall consist of the lands, waters, and interests in lands and waters generally depicted on the boundary map entitled "Little River Canyon National Preserve", numbered NA-LRNP-80,001C, and dated March 1992.

(c) MAP.—The map referred to in subsection (b) shall—

(1) be on file and available for public inspection in the offices of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior in Washington, District of Columbia; and

(2) be filed with the appropriate offices of DeKalb and Cherokee Counties in the State of Alabama.

(d) PUBLICATION OF DESCRIPTION.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior (referred to in this Act as the "Secretary") shall publish in the Federal Register a detailed description of the boundaries of the Preserve.

SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATION.

16 USC 698r.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Preserve shall be administered by the Secretary in accordance with this Act and in accordance with the laws generally applicable to units of the National Park System, including—

(1) the Act entitled "An Act to establish a National Park Service, and for other purposes", approved August 25, 1916 (16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.); and

(2) the Act entitled "An Act to provide for the preservation of historic American sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance, and for other purposes", approved August 21, 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461 et seq.).

(b) HUNTING AND FISHING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Secretary shall permit hunting, trapping, and fishing on lands and waters under the jurisdiction of the Secretary within the Preserve in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws.

(2) **TIME AND PLACE RESTRICTIONS.**—Subject to such terms and conditions as the Secretary considers necessary in furtherance of this Act, and after consultation with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources of the State of Alabama and owners of lands adjacent to the Preserve, the Secretary may designate zones where, and establish periods when, the activities described in paragraph (1) will not be permitted within the Preserve for reasons of public safety, administration, fish and wildlife habitat, or public use and enjoyment.

(3) **RESTRICTIONS IN BOUNDARY AREAS.**—After consultation with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources of the State of Alabama and with the owners of lands adjacent to the Preserve, the Secretary may restrict hunting in areas within the Preserve that are adjacent to the boundaries of the Preserve where the restriction is necessary or appropriate to protect public safety.

(4) **CONGRESSIONAL INTENT.**—Nothing in this Act is intended to affect the jurisdiction or responsibilities of the State of Alabama with respect to fish and wildlife.

(c) **WATER RESOURCES PROJECTS.**—Subsection (a) of section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1278(a)) shall apply to that portion of the Little River that flows through the Preserve in the same manner and to the same extent as such subsection applies to the rivers referred to in such subsection. The application of such subsection to the Preserve shall not affect any determination of the value of the lands, waters, or interests in lands and waters within the boundaries of the Preserve.

(d) **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH STATE.**—

(1) **LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FIRE PREVENTION.**—In administering the Preserve, the Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Alabama, or any political subdivision of the State, for the rendering of—

(A) rescue, fire fighting, and law enforcement services;

and

(B) cooperative assistance by law enforcement and fire preventive agencies located in the vicinity of the Preserve.

(2) **PREPARATION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN.**—To facilitate the purposes of this section, the Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Alabama and directly affected political subdivisions of the State to provide professional assistance in the preparation of the management plan for the Preserve.

Contracts.

(e) **DESOTO STATE PARK.**—If lands within DeSoto State Park are acquired by the Secretary, at the request of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources of the State of Alabama, the Secretary shall enter into a cooperative agreement with the Department for the continued management by the Department of the lodge and other facilities that, as of the date of enactment of this Act, are part of DeSoto State Park. The cooperative agreement shall provide for the management and operation of the lodge and facilities in a manner that, to the maximum extent practicable, is consistent with similar operations elsewhere in the National Park System.

(f) **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT.**—

(1) **PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION PROGRAM.**—The Secretary shall develop and conduct a program to promote and encourage awareness of and participation in the develop-

ment of the general management plan for the Preserve by persons owning property in the vicinity of the Preserve, other interested groups and individuals, State, county, and municipal agencies, and the general public. Prior to final approval of the plan, the Secretary shall hold public meetings in DeKalb and Cherokee Counties.

(2) **CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC COMMENT.**—In preparing and implementing the plan described in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall give full consideration to the views and comments of the individuals, groups, and agencies described in paragraph (1).

(g) **GREEN PITCHER PLANT.**—Upon the transfer by Alabama Power Company to the United States of any lands within the boundaries of the Preserve that contain the Green Pitcher Plant (*Sarracenia oreophila*), all rights and obligations of Alabama Power Company under the agreement entered into between the company and the Department of the Interior (including the United States Fish and Wildlife Service) on May 12, 1983, in settlement of the action brought on September 24, 1980, against the Secretary and the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama (Civil Action No. CV 80-C-1242-M), shall be extinguished.

SEC. 4. ACQUISITION.

16 USC 698s.

(a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the Secretary is authorized to acquire lands, waters, and interests in lands and waters within the boundaries of the Preserve by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.

(2) **CONSENT OF THE OWNER.**—The Secretary may not acquire lands, waters, or interests in lands and waters for the Preserve without the consent of the owner.

(3) **STATE LANDS.**—Lands, waters, and interests in lands and waters within the boundaries of the Preserve that are owned by the State of Alabama, or any political subdivision of the State, may be acquired only by donation or exchange.

(b) **NEGOTIATIONS FOR ACQUISITION.**—

(1) **COMMENCEMENT OF NEGOTIATIONS.**—Immediately after publication of a description of the boundaries of the Preserve in accordance with section 2(d), the Secretary shall commence negotiations for the acquisition of the lands, waters, and interests in lands and waters within the boundaries of the Preserve.

(2) **REPORT TO CONGRESS.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit, in writing, a detailed schedule of actions and a progress report regarding the acquisition to—

(A) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(C) the Committees on Appropriations of Congress.

(3) **ACQUISITION DEADLINE.**—The Secretary shall substantially complete the acquisition of the lands, waters, and interests in lands and waters within the Preserve, in accordance with the purposes of this Act, not later than 2 years after

the date of enactment of this Act, subject to the availability of funds.

(c) ENVIRONMENTAL AUDITS.—

(1) AVAILABILITY TO OWNER.—Promptly following completion of any environmental audit performed by or on behalf of the Secretary with respect to any property proposed to be acquired for the purposes of this Act, the Secretary shall make available to the owner of the property a copy of the audit.

(2) INCLUSION IN DOCUMENTS TRANSFERRING TITLE.—Any audit described in paragraph (1), and any environmental audit performed by the owner of the property and submitted to the Secretary prior to the date of the acquisition, shall be included as part of the documents transferring title to the property to the United States.

(d) FUTURE ADDITIONS.—No lands or interest in lands may be added to the Preserve after the date of enactment of this Act without specific authorization by Congress and the consent of the owner of the lands or interest.

16 USC 698t.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.

Approved October 21, 1992.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 3665:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 102-482 (Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 102-472 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 138 (1992):

Apr. 7, considered and passed House.

Oct. 1, considered and passed Senate, amended.

Oct. 3, House concurred in Senate amendment.

APPENDIX C: PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

Larry Beane, Interpretive Ranger, Little River Canyon National Preserve, NPS
Steve Black, Superintendent, Little River Canyon National Preserve, NPS
Toni Dufficy, Contracting Officer's Representative and Interpretive Planner, Harpers
Ferry Center, NPS
Thereasa Hulgan, Executive Director, Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce
Sheila Hurtt, NPS Volunteer, Jacksonville State University employee
John Ingraham, NPS Volunteer
Valerie Saferite, Chief Ranger, Little River Canyon National Preserve, NPS
Mary Shew, Resource Management Specialist, Little River Canyon National Preserve,
NPS
Bill Shugart, One World Adventure
Angie Shugart, One World Adventure
Niki Wayner, Jacksonville State University Field Schools
Kayla Worthey, Dekalb County Tourism
Wade Lewis, Supervisory Facilities Operations Specialist, Little River Canyon National
Preserve, NPS

Consulting Team: Goolrick Interpretive Group

Faye Goolrick, CIP
Russ Smith, Interpretive Planner

APPENDIX D: INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Programs by Topic

Contact the park at (256 – 845 – 9605) or email Larry_Beane@nps.gov for programs or information.

C = Classrooms/School Programs, P = PowerPoint, Tech = Technology. *New Programs in Italics*

Archeology and Indians

- American Indian Tools and Weapons (Making stone tools, use atlatl, bow drill for fire, cordage, foods, games, artifacts)
- Archeology of Little River Canyon (P, C)
- Archeology Merit Badge (Some P, C)
- Archeology of Northeastern Alabama National Parks (combination of LIRI & RUCA) (P, C)
- Archeology of Russell Cave National Monument (P, C)
- Atlatl – The Ancient Spear thrower (no longer allowing public to use it under my supervision)
- Blacks and Indians in Alabama and the Southeast (old 35mm slide program, not updated and rented video programs - \$100)
- Chunkey – American Indian Game of Skill
- How the Indians Got Fire (Cherokee)
- Indian Lore Merit Badge (P, C and more)
- Native American Month in November
- Project Archaeology: Investigating Shelter (Multiple programs beginning with science & reading) (C)
- Trail of Tears: DVD – 23 minutes - can be downloaded or ordered at <http://www.nps.gov/trte/photosmultimedia/dvd.htm> (C)
- Trail of Tears: I am... who is? (C)
- Trail of Tears: Locations at Martha's Falls Parking Pull Out & CR 861, CR 295 by Edna Hill, and Blue Hole
- Trail of Tears March to Fort Smith (C)
- Trail of Tears: The Archeology of Forts and Cherokees Activity (Cherokee Cabin)
- Trail of Tears: The Benge Route from Fort Payne (P,C)
- Trail of Tears: Tolerance, Intolerance, and Survival (C)
- Trail of Tears: Oral History Family Stories- Using Technology To Access Primary Documents (C, Tech)

Hikes (any hike can be insects, wildflowers, or nature walk)

- Beaver Pond Trail Wildflower Hike
- Beaver Pond Trail Wildflower and Insects Hike
- Burn Area Hikes/ Fire Management at Little River Canyon (pre-burn, post-burn and later after regrowth)
- Butterfly walk on 01
- Deep Canyon Hike (usually with JSU)
- DSP Azalea Cascade Trail Boardwalk
- DSP Blue/Red?Orange Trail Loop
- DSP CCC Hike
- DSP CCC Quarry Hike

DSP DeSoto Scout Trail to 05 Trailhead (or reversed)*
 DSP Hike from DSP to 05 CCC Road (shuttle needed) *DeSoto Scout Trail Hike
 DSP Wildflower Saturday at DSP first Saturday in May, next week at LIRI *
 DSP Waterfall Hike *
 DSP Yellow Trail Hike *
 Eberhart Point *
 Falls to Martha's Falls Little River Falls Trail
 Martha's Falls *
 Pitcher Plants JSU Trail on corner of yard *
 Powell Trail *
 Scale Back Alabama Exercise and Weight Loss hikes Path to Learning at the Canyon Center
 Waterfall Hike at DeSoto State Park
 Wildflower Saturday at DeSoto State Park
 Wildflower Walk at Beaver Pond
 Wildflower Walk at Canyon Mouth
 Wildflower Walk at Lynn Overlook
 Wildflower Walk at 01/Slant Rock Road (Also Insects Walk)
 Winter Wonders Walk

Nature

Bats (using BCI slides...not updated) *
 BioBlitz – iNaturalist projects discovering and recording species in the park (see iNaturalist.org)
 (some C, Tech)
 Bugs on a Blanket – Insects Study and Discovery at Little River Canyon
 Camouflage Critters of Little River Canyon National Preserve (P, C)
 Chestnuts (Several lesson plans for school use at the park) (some P, C)
 Christmas Bird Count*
Fish and Wildlife Merit Badge (C)
 Fish of Little River Canyon National Preserve (P, C)
 Fred the Fish - River Ecology Activity for Students (C)
 Great Back Yard Bird Count
Insects of Little River Canyon (Revised 2017) (P, C)
 International Migratory Bird Day
 Moth Sampling at Little River Canyon
Path to Learning
 Plants and Animals of Little River Canyon (P, C)
 Plants of Little River Canyon (P, C)
 River Levels Study – Using Technology, Primary Documents and Analysis to Discover Trends (C,
 Tech)
Skulls, Skins and Teeth (Uses RUCA or JSU Casts) (2017) (C)
 Snakes and Spiders (P, C)
 Wildflowers of Canyon View (talk at Canyon View)
 Wildflowers of Lynn Overlook

Ecology

Canyon Center Tour (C)
 Canyon Center Sustainability/Conservation (Hunt for features) (C)
 Ecology of Little River Canyon for Children (C)

Green Giving for the Holidays* (no Attendance)
 Green Pitcher Plant Ecological Activity for Students (C)
 Teaching with Leopold
 Tree Ring Stories (environmental change and dating technology) (C)

Geology

Explaining Plate Tectonics with Cookies (C)
 Fossils of Little River Canyon (presented out of the box anywhere with or without Geology) (C)
 Geology of Little River Canyon (P, C)
 Geology Talk at Little River Falls
Geology Merit Badge (C, P)

History

Economic Impact of Little River Canyon National Preserve (P, C)
 Hernando DeSoto: Travel, Discovery, Facing Great Adversity (with Pre and Post Activities)
 History Hike at the Little River Falls Area
 History Hike CR 295 Parking and Hill Family Road.
 History of Little River Canyon (P, C varies from Historical Society to shorter public program)
 History Day: Oral History and photos of Little River Canyon
 History: Civilian Conservation Corp, DeSoto State Park and Little River Canyon
 Oral History Collection- historic photographs of Little River digitized (set up copy stand, furnish CDs to visitors bringing pictures in return for copies and rights)
 Oral History Collections at Little River Canyon (Showing off archival collections and stories of Little River)

Activities

13 Way Not to Die at the Canyon: Playing it Safe at Little River (Safety Program) (P, C)
 Auto Caravan Tour of the Canyon
 Canyon View Interpretation
 Firemaking Without Matches
 Flintknapping Workshop – Making Arrowheads
 GPS Junior Ranger (Book in several drafts; did this for one group as a test pilot run)
 Junior Ranger Day Dress Up day for photos
 Junior Ranger Little River Canyon National Preserve (C)
 Junior Ranger Night Skies Program
 National Public Lands Day (DST work Day *, Cleanup Day)
 Native American Games – Cup and Pin, Bowl and Corn/Beans, Sticks and Sacks, Stickball, Chunkey
 NPS Jobs
 Prehistoric Drilling Techniques (bow drill, pump drill, hollow cane drill, hand drill)
 Paddling the Backcountry Section of Little River (ranger-guided river trip)
 Ropes and Strings, It's All Tied Together (Making Cordage) (C, with P)
 Survival Training
 Water Safety
 #Instameet
 Message in A Bottle – Last October Thursday All-Day in Gadsden ~ 500- 700 brief contacts - Anti Litter *

National Get Outdoors Day (invited to Munford school most years) June * ~ 500 – 1000 contacts

Broadcast program of Russell Cave Archeology and Tools and Weapons to schools with ALDSE/NASA

Earth Day Programs at various schools

Continuing Education

Geology of Little River Canyon National Preserve (P, C, Outside)

Ecology, plants and Animals of Little River Canyon National Preserve (P, C, Outside)

Trail of Tears – focused on Cherokee, Jackson or DeKalb County (P, C, Tech, Outside)

Path to Learning, Geology, and Little River Plants and Animals: for Legacy Programs

Project Archaeology Programs for middle school classes or teachers' workshops

Investigating Shelter (C, Outside)

Intrigue of the Past (C, Outside)

Petroglyphs (C, Outside) (Scheduled and canceled; not taught yet)

(NPS interpretive ranger Larry Beane is certified as a Master Teacher for Project Archaeology; <http://projectarchaeology.org>)