



Annual Performance Plan

October 1, 2002 - September 30, 2003

Annual Performance
Plan
for
Big Thicket National Preserve

Approved: _____ Date
Richard Peterson,
Superintendent

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval page	2
Table of Contents	3
Preface	5
Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA)	5
About this plan	7
I. Mission	9
Legislative Intent	9
Purpose	9
Significance	9
Mission Statement	9
Mission Goals	10
Goal Category I: Preserve Park Resources	10
Mission Goal Ia	10
Mission Goal Ib	10
Goal Category II: Provide for Public Enjoyment and Visitor Experience	10
Mission Goal IIa	10
Mission Goal IIb	10
Goal Category III: Legislated Partnerships	10
Goal Category IV: Ensure Organizational Effectiveness	10
Mission Goal IVa	10
Mission Goal IVb	10
II. Preserve Long-term Goals and Annual Goals Listing	11
List of Long-term and Annual Goals	11
Goals Explanations	11
Ia1A Disturbed Lands	11
Ia01A Disturbed Lands (Park Specific)	11
Ia1B Exotic Plant Species	11
Ia01B Other Exotic Species	11
Ia02A T & E Species Improved	11
Ia02D T & E Species Unknown	12
Ia4 Water Quality	12
Ia5 Historic Structures	12
Ia6 Museum Collections	12
Ia08 Archeological Sites	12
Ia0 Geologic Resources	12
Ia0 Preserve Park Resources	12
Ib2B Cultural Landscape Baseline	13
Ib2C Historic Structures Information	13
Ib2D Museum Collections	13
Ib2F Historical Research Baseline	13
Ib3 Vital Signs	13
IIa1 Visitor Satisfaction	14
IIa2 Visitor Safety	14
IIb1 Visitor Understanding and Appreciation	15

16	IVa3A Employee Performance Agreements	
	IVa4A Workforce Diversity – Permanent Women/Minorities	16
	IVa4B Workforce Diversity – Temporary/Seasonal Women/Minorities	16
	IVa4C Workforce Diversity – Permanent Employees with Disabilities	16
	IVa4D Workforce Diversity – Seasonal Employees with Disabilities	16
	IVa5 Employee Housing	16
	IVa6A Employee Safety (Lost-time Accidents)	17
	IVa6B Employee Safety (Continuation of Pay)	17
	IVb1 Volunteer Hours	18
	IVb2A Cash Donations	18
	IVb2C Cash Value of In-kind Donations-Cooperating Association	18
	III. How Goals Will Be Accomplished	19
	IV. Key External Factors	21
	Introduction	21
	Changing Demographics and Population Growth	21
	Water Needs	21
	V. Strategic Plan Preparers	23
	Appendix A	
	• Big Thicket National Preserve Annual Performance Work Plan for FY2001	

PREFACE

Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA)

GPRA is one of the most recent and comprehensive of a number of laws and executive orders directing federal agencies to join the “*performance management revolution*” already embraced by private industry and many local, state, and national governments.

In a nutshell, *performance management* ensures that daily actions and expenditures of resources are guided by long- and short-term goal setting in pursuit of accomplishing an organization’s primary mission, followed by performance measurement and evaluation. Importantly, the goals are quantifiable and measurable results or outcomes, rather than efforts or outputs (activities, services, products). The established and proven performance management approach is to ***establish goals – allocate resources to accomplish those goals – take action/do the work – measure results – evaluate and report performance – use evaluation to adjust goals and reallocate resources – and continue the loop.*** This process sharpens our focus on accomplishing our mission in the most efficient and effective ways, and holds managers and employees accountable on a clear and measurable basis.

GPRA requires federal agencies to develop and use three primary documents in conducting their business. These documents are also to be submitted to the Congress and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB):

1. **Strategic Plan** of no less than five years duration, reviewed and revised every three years, and containing:
 - mission statement based in law, executive order, etc.;
 - long-term goals, which are objective, quantified, and measurable, to accomplish mission;
 - how goals will be accomplished, an adequate explanation including “...operational processes, skills and technology, and the human, capital, information and other resources required to meet those goals...”;
 - relationship of annual goals to long term goals, a description of how long term goals are carried out in annual goal increments;
 - key external factors which could positively or negatively affect goal accomplishment; and
 - program evaluation methodology, a description of how mission and goals were arrived at and a schedule for future program evaluations.
 - GPRA also requires consultation with affected and interested parties in the development of the Strategic Plan, and it requires that the plan be
 - developed by federal employees (versus contractors, etc.).
2. **Annual Performance Plan** tiered off the Strategic Plan each year, showing how long term goals will be accomplished in annual increments, and containing:
 - annual goals to incrementally achieve long-term goals in Strategic Plan;
 - annual work plan, i.e. explanation of how annual goals will be accomplished – “briefly describe the operational processes, skills and technology, and the human, capital, information and other resources required to meet the performance goals...”; and
 - basis for measuring results – “...provide a basis for comparing actual program results with the established performance goals...” and “...describe the means to be used to verify and validate measured values.”

3. **Annual Performance Report** reviewing each year's successes and failures and identifying areas where activities or goals need to be revised in the future, addressing:

- what annual goals were met or exceeded;
- what annual goals were not met;
- why annual goals were not met; and
- what remedial action will be taken for goals not met.

Importantly, GPRA mandates that long-term and annual goals be **results or outcomes** rather than outputs (activities, products, or services) and that they be “objective, quantifiable, and measurable” so that performance can be adequately measured and reported, progress on mission accomplishment assessed, and managers and employees held accountable.

While the National Park Service has long been a mission-oriented organization, it has also had a long tradition of planning, managing, and budgeting by activity, problem solving and issue resolution. Its response to GPRA requirements will help it focus on accomplishing mission through establishing long-term and annual goals, allocating resources to those goals, and measuring and reporting results.

About This Plan

Big Thicket National Preserve Annual Performance Plan

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires both a five-year strategic and annual performance plans. The five-year strategic plans include the Service's mission goals and specific long-term goals. The annual performance plans establish performance goals for the fiscal year which are tiered off the Service's mission goals and long-term goals. The annual performance goals:

1. define the level of performance to be achieved;
2. they are expressed in an objective, quantifiable, and measurable form;
3. they briefly describe the operational process, skills and technology, and the human capital, information, or other resources required to meet the performance goals;
4. they establish performance indicators to be used in measuring or assessing the relevant outputs, service levels, and outcomes;
5. they provide a basis for comparing actual program results with established performance goals; and
6. they describe the means to be used to verify and validate measured values.

GPRA defines outcome measure as an assessment of the results of a program activity compared to its intended purpose. Output measure is defined as the tabulation, calculation, or recording of activity or effort and is expressed in a quantitative or qualitative manner.

The performance annual goals in this plan were developed by Big Thicket National Preserve personnel.

Budget Linkages

Each of the annual performance goals has an associated Annual Work Plan (AWP). Each AWP consists of long-term goal and annual goal statement, work product/service/activity, responsible division and party, planned output, dollars cost and associated FTE.

NPS reporting requirements did not allow the reporting of costs and FTEs for NPS Mission Goal IV. Therefore, the costs and FTEs associated long-term and annual performance goals under Mission Goal IV are included in the tables under Mission Goals I and II. The total costs are based on the FY03 "Green Book" listing for the Preserve. FTEs are based on actual usage for FY02 at Big Thicket National Preserve.

FY03 Office/Division Breakdown of "Green Book" totals for Preserve

Office/Division	Costs	FTE
Superintendent	\$ 224,000	3
Administration	\$ 356,000	6
Resource Education	\$ 339,000	6
V/R Protection	\$ 651,000	8
Resource Management	\$ 336,000	5
Maintenance	\$ 328,000	5
Total	\$2,234,000	33

It should be noted that the goals in this plan are generally predicated on "flat budgets" for the next five years. Other than increases for inflation, we assumed no major increases in funding. Where increases in appropriations were known or are likely, they were taken into account. Where other funding sources (donations, fee revenues, etc.) were "reasonably assured", they too were taken into consideration when setting performance targets. Obviously, limits on funding constrain what can be accomplished toward our goals and mission. GPRA; however, is distinctly not about discussing budget shortfalls or requesting or justifying additional funding. Rather it is about planning, managing, and communicating what we can

accomplish with what we already have. Performance target numbers speak for themselves about how well funded we are to accomplish our mission, and where targets are low, additional budget discussions might be generated. But this is not the primary purpose of the plan.

We would; however, be remiss in our duties as stewards of and storytellers about the priceless natural and cultural resources - defining America's heritage - which are in our care if we did not duly note that we sincerely believe we are under-funded and under-staffed to fully achieve our important mission and goals. On the other hand, we also recognize that we are but one of many worthwhile federal enterprises which compete for scarce and precious tax dollars, and we are pursuing a wide variety of alternative management, funding, and staffing scenarios to supplement our appropriations. In the meantime, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the requirements of GPRA with this *Strategic Plan* and its companion documents to better plan, manage, and communicate how - and how well - we are achieving our mission through performance goals supported by existing, and largely flat, levels of funding.

Additional copies of the Big Thicket National Preserve Strategic Plan are available at park headquarters at 3785 Milam Street, Beaumont, Texas 77701. Questions and comments are welcome and encouraged and can be addressed to the Superintendent at the address above. As they are written and approved, copies of the current year's *Annual Performance Plan* and *Annual Performance Report* will also be available on request, with questions and comments equally welcome.

I. MISSION of the National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve

Big Thicket National Preserve, an area in Southeast Texas known for extensive biological diversity, is dedicated to protect, interpret, restore, and preserve those biological resources; while providing for research, public enjoyment, and closely managed consumptive activities authorized by Congress.

The mission of the National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve is rooted in and grows from the park's legislated mandate found in the Act of Congress, Public Law 93-439 on October 11, 1974 and supplemented by amendments authorizing the National Park Service to acquire 96,991 acres in 15 units. Our mission statement is a synthesis of this mandated purpose, plus the park's primary significance as itemized below.

Legislative Intent

Public Law 94-439 creating Big Thicket National Preserve mandates the National Park Service to:

- Assure the preservation, conservation, and protection of the unique natural, scenic, and recreational values and to provide for the enhancement and public enjoyment thereof.
- To maintain the ecological integrity of these resources by limiting and controlling:
 - a) motorized land and water vehicles
 - b) exploration and extraction of mineral resources; and
 - c) new construction, grazing, agriculture, and other uses
- To permit continuation of some traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of Big Thicket National Preserve is to protect the remnants of diverse natural biological communities and processes. The park will also allow resource-based recreation by monitoring consumptive recreational uses. Researchers will have access to park resources to obtain baseline information for research. The park will interpret and preserve the cultural history of the Big Thicket area. The National Park Service will manage and maintain the ecological integrity in perpetuity. The park will educate and inform the public regarding the national and international importance of biological diversity.

Significance

The primary significance of Big Thicket National Preserve can be summarized as:

- The Preserve contains remnants of a vastly diverse ecological system and provides habitat for several threatened and endangered species.
- The Preserve provides protected publicly managed lands for public recreation and research on evolution of natural ecosystems.
- The Preserve is located close to an urban/industrial area which facilitates educating a broad audience about the interaction of humans with their environments.

Mission Statement

Big Thicket National Preserve, an area in Southeast Texas known for extensive biological diversity is dedicated to protect, interpret, restore, and preserve those biological resources; while providing for research, public enjoyment, and closely managed consumptive activities authorized by Congress.

Mission Goals

Big Thicket National Preserve's mission is accomplished through pursuit of the following broad, "in perpetuity" mission goals:

Goal Category I Preserve Big Thicket National Preserve Resources

Ia Natural and cultural resources and associated values at Big Thicket National Preserve are protected, restored and maintained in good condition and managed within their broader ecosystem and cultural context.

Ib The National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve contributes to knowledge about natural and cultural resources and associated values; management decisions about resources and visitors are based on adequate scholarly and scientific information.

Goal Category II Provide for the Public Use and Enjoyment and Visitor Experience of Big Thicket National Preserve.

IIa Visitors to Big Thicket National Preserve safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities.

IIb Park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of Big Thicket National Preserve and its resources for this and future generations.

Goal Category III Strengthen and Preserve Natural and Cultural Resources and Enhance Recreational Opportunities Managed by Partners.

*This mission goal refers to the legislated NPS partnership programs and is accomplished by central offices rather than parks. Park partnership goals, as appropriate, are listed under Mission Goal IVbX.

Goal Category IV Ensure Organizational Effectiveness of Big Thicket National Preserve

IVa The National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve uses current management practices, systems, and technologies to accomplish its mission.

IVb The National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve increases its managerial capabilities through initiatives and support from other agencies, organizations, and individuals.

II. PRESERVE LONG-TERM AND ANNUAL GOALS LISTING

Mission Goal Ia: Natural and cultural resources and associated values at Big Thicket National Preserve are protected, restored and maintained in good condition and managed within their broader ecosystem and cultural context.

Big Thicket National Preserve Long-Term Goals:

BITH Long-term Goal Ia0-BT10: By September 30, 2005, 27 (100%) oil and gas wells are compliant with 36CFR 9B regulations.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a0-BT10: By September 30, 2003, 22 oil and gas wells are compliant with 36CFR 9B regulations.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia01A: By September 30, 2005, 150 (1%) of 13,000 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve lands disturbed by fire suppression and targeted (by September 30, 1999) for restoration, are restored.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal Ia01A: By September 30, 2003, 90 (.7%) of 13,000 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve lands disturbed by fire suppression and targeted (by September 30, 1999) for restoration are restored.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia01B: By September 30, 2005, 250 (3%) of 7784 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve's targeted lands impacted by feral hogs FY 1999, are contained.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a01B: By September 30, 2003, information from the feral hog study and lands containment will be analyzed and written into a Hog Management Plan, including impacted land containment actions.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia8: By September 30, 2005, two (16%) of 12 Big Thicket National Preserve archeological sites not listed on the FY1999 National Park Service Archeological Sites Management Information System (ASMIS), listed without condition assessments, are in good condition.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a8: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will receive project funding to protect and improve the condition of two identified sites.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia1A: By September 30, 2005, 10 (5%) 188 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve's lands disturbed by prior physical development or agricultural use and targeted (by September 30, 1999) for restoration, are restored.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal Ia1A: By September 30, 2003, 6 (3%) of 188 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve lands disturbed by prior physical development or agricultural use and targeted (by September 30, 1999) for restoration are restored.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia1B: By September 30, 2005, 450 (50%) of 900 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve's land impacted by exotic vegetation (Chinese Tallow) and targeted by September 30, 1999, are contained.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal Ia1B: By September 30, 2003, 350 (39%) of 900 acres of Big Thicket National Preserve's land impacted by exotic vegetation (Chinese Tallow) and targeted by September 30, 1999, are contained.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia2A: By September 30, 2005, 2 (33%) of 6 FY1999 federally listed threatened and endangered species not having critical habitat in Big Thicket National Preserve and not requiring NPS recovery actions have an improving status.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a2A: By September 30, 2003, 2 of 6 FY1999 federally listed threatened and endangered species not having critical habitat in Big Thicket National Preserve and not requiring NPS recovery actions has an improving status.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia2D: By September 30, 2005, 3 (49.5%) of 6 FY1999 federally listed threatened and endangered species not having critical habitat in Big Thicket National Preserve and not requiring National Park Service recovery actions have an unknown status.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a2D: By September 30, 2003, 3 of 6 FY 1999 federally listed threatened and endangered species not having critical habitat in Big Thicket National Preserve and are not requiring National Park Service recovery actions have an unknown status.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia2E: By September 30, 2005, 1 (16.5%) of 6 FY1999 federally listed threatened and endangered species not having critical habitat in Big Thicket National Preserve and not requiring NPS recovery actions has an extirpated status.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal Ia2E: By September 30, 2003, 1 of 6 FY1999 federally listed threatened and endangered species not having critical habitat in Big Thicket National Preserve and not requiring NPS recovery actions has an extirpated status.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia4: By September 30, 2005, Big Thicket National Preserve has impaired water quality.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a4: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve has impaired water quality.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia5: By September 30, 2005, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain one historic structure in good condition.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a5: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain one historical structure in good condition.

BITH Long-term Goal Ia6: By September 30, 2005, 50 (86%) of 58 applicable preservation and protection standards for Big Thicket National Preserve museum collection are met.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1a6: By September 30, 2003, 45 (77%) of 58 applicable preservation and protection standards for Big Thicket National Preserve museum collection are met.

Mission Goal Ib: The National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve contributes to knowledge about natural and cultural resources and associated values; management decisions about resources and visitors are based on adequate scholarly and scientific information

Big Thicket National Preserve Long-Term Goals:

BITH Long-term Goal Ib2B: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve's cultural landscapes entered on the National Park Service Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) at Level II is increased from 0 in FY 1999 to 1 (100%).

BITH FY03 Annual Goal Ib2B: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain the FY1999 CLI base level of 0.

BITH Long-term Goal Ib2C: By September 30, 2005, Big Thicket National Preserve's historic structure on the FY1999 List of Classified Structures (LCS) has updated information in the LCS records.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal Ib2C: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain current updated records as information becomes available.

BITH Long-term Goal Ib2D: By September 30, 2005, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain the number of museum objects catalogued at the FY 1999 level of 182.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1b2D: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain current updated records as information becomes available.

BITH Long-term Goal Ib2F: By September 30, 2005, Big Thicket National Preserve's Historic Resource Study (HRS) and Administrative History are not completed to professional standards, current (approved since 1980), and entered in CRBIB.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1b2F: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve Historic Resource Study (HRS) and Administrative History are not completed to professional standards, current (approved since 1980), and entered in CRBIB.

BITH Long-term Goal Ib3: By September 30, 2005, Big Thicket National Preserve has identified its vital signs for natural resource monitoring.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal 1b3: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will have identified participants for the Vital Signs workshop.

Mission Goal IIa: Visitors to Big Thicket National Preserve safely enjoy and are satisfied with the availability, accessibility, diversity, and quality of park facilities, services, and appropriate recreational opportunities.

Big Thicket National Preserve Long-Term Goals:

BITH Long-term Goal IIa1: By September 30, 2005, 90% of visitors to Big Thicket National Preserve are satisfied with appropriate park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IIa1: By September 30, 2003, 90% of visitors to Big Thicket National Preserve are satisfied with appropriate park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities.

BITH Long-term Goal IIa2: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve visitor accidents/incidents is no higher than two per year.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IIa2: By September 30, 2003, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve visitor accidents/incidents is no higher than two per year.

Mission Goal IIb: Park visitors and the general public understand and appreciate the preservation of Big Thicket National Preserve and its resources for this and future generations.

Big Thicket National Preserve Long-Term Goals:

BITH Long-term Goal IIb1: By September 30, 2005, 70% of Big Thicket National Preserve visitors understand the significance of the Preserve.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IIb1: By September 30, 2003, 70% of Big Thicket National Preserve visitors understand the significance of the Preserve.

Mission Goal IVa: The National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve uses current management practices, systems, and technologies to accomplish its mission.

Big Thicket National Preserve Long-Term Goals:

BITH Long-term Goal IVa3A: By September 30, 2005, 100% of Big Thicket National Preserve employee performance plans are linked to appropriate strategic and annual performance goals and position competencies.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVa3A: By September 30, 2003, 70% (38) of Big Thicket National Preserve employee performance plans are linked to appropriate strategic and annual performance goal and position competencies.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa4A: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve permanent positions in the 9-targeted occupational series filled by employees from underrepresented groups is maintained at the FY1999 level of 2.

BITH Annual Goal IVa4A: By September 30, 2003, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve permanent positions in the 9-targeted occupational series filled by employees from underrepresented groups is maintained at the FY1999 level of 2. Park reporting has been suspended and all data is now input by Washington.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa4B: By September 30, 2005, the total number of Big Thicket National Preserve temporary/seasonal positions annually filled by women and minorities is maintained at the FY1997 level of 4.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVa4B: By September 30, 2003, the total number of Big Thicket National Preserve temporary/seasonal positions annually filled by women and minorities is maintained at the FY97 level of 4. Park reporting has been suspended and all data is now input by Washington.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa4C: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve permanent positions filled by employees with disabilities is increased from 0 in FY1999 to 1 (100% increase).

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVa4C: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will begin using the new Recruitment Plan for filling Preserve vacancies. Park reporting has been suspended and all data is now input by Washington.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa4D: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve temporary/seasonal positions filled by employees with disabilities is increased from 0 in FY 1999 to 1 (100% increase).

BITH FY03 IVa4D: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will begin using the new Recruitment Plan for filling Preserve vacancies. Park reporting has been suspended and all data is now input by Washington.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa5: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve employee housing units listed in poor or fair condition is reduced from 1 in FY1997 to 0.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVa5: By September 30, 2003, Big Thicket National Preserve will maintain all employee-housing units in good condition.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa6A: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve employee lost time injuries are maintained at the FY1992-FY1996 five-year annual average of 2.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVa6A: By September 30, 2003, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve employee lost time injuries is maintained at the FY1992-1996 five-year average of 2.

BITH Long-term Goal IVa6B: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve hours of Continuation of Pay is maintained at 104.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVa6B: By September 30, 2003, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve hours of Continuation of Pay is maintained at 104.

Mission Goal IVb: The National Park Service at Big Thicket National Preserve increases its managerial capabilities through initiatives and support from other agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Big Thicket National Preserve Long-Term Goals:

BITH Long-term Goal IVb1: By September 30, 2005, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve volunteer hours is maintained at the 2500 level.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVb1: By September 30, 2003, the number of Big Thicket National Preserve volunteer hours is maintained at the 2500 level.

BITH Long-term Goal IVb2A: By September 30, 2005, cash donations to Big Thicket National Preserve are maintained at the FY1998 level of \$225.00.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVb2A: By September 30, 2003, cash donations to Big Thicket National Preserve are maintained at the FY1998 level of \$225.00.

BITH Long-term Goal IVb2C: By September 30, 2005, the cash value of in-kind donations, grants, and services provided Big Thicket National Preserve by Southwest Parks and Monuments Association and other cooperators is maintained at the FY1998 level of \$1127.00.

BITH FY03 Annual Goal IVb2C: By September 30, 2003, the cash value of in-kind donations, grants, and services provided Big Thicket National Preserve by Southwest Parks and Monuments Association and other cooperators is maintained at the FY1997 level of \$1127.00.

III. HOW GOALS WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED

Big Thicket National Preserve's long-term goals will be accomplished in five annual increments detailed each year in an Annual Performance Plan. The Annual Performance Plan will contain annual goal increments of the long-term goals. It will also contain a work plan for each annual goal, which will lay out the activities and products, along with their personnel and fiscal costs that will be carried out to achieve the annual goal.

We have developed this strategic plan and long-term goals based upon the availability of Congressionally appropriated funds. In addition, the park receives other funds from donations and special emphasis programs. Current human and fiscal resources available to achieve the park's goals and carry out its mission include an annual base operating budget of approximately \$2,268,000 (in 2003 dollars), a permanent work force of approximately 33 permanent positions and 16+/- seasonal positions. This work force is supplemented by 1800+ hours of Volunteers-in-Parks service.

Achieving and/or exceeding performance targets in annual and long-term goals is sometimes dependent on the availability of special project funds and assistance from Regional Support Offices, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, and other National Park Service support organizations, as well as partners and cooperators. One such typical partner is Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, which sells interpretive literature in park visitor centers and contact stations and donates the proceeds back to support park educational and resource management goals.

Preserve staff is led by a superintendent. Staff is organized into six operating divisions: Resource Management, Resource Education, Maintenance, Visitor and Resource Protection, Administration and Management.

The **Superintendent** directs the overall management of Big Thicket National Preserve. Management assures that the Preserve's operational activities are in harmony with applicable legislation, directives, regulations, policies, and guidelines. Management provides direction for all planning activities in the park and develops and maintains the areas' public relations and external affairs program. Special emphasis is placed upon addressing the key external factors and critical and controversial issues. The office maintains a working relationship with the Congressional delegation, state officials, special interest groups, interested stakeholders and other bureau, departmental and government offices.

The **Administration Division** provides support in areas of finance, budget and programming, purchasing and contracting, property management, human resources management, housing, record management, and computer operations. All of these functions support the total park operation and require a close working relationship with other divisions and management.

The **Division of Resource Management** administers the park's science and research program, including reviewing the issuance of scientific collecting permits for all research in the Preserve. It is responsible for all natural resource programs, such as environmental compliance, wildlife management, vegetation management, an active fire management program, exotic plant control, threatened and endangered species, integrated pest management, water and air quality monitoring and the Geographic Information System (GIS). The division manages the cultural resource programs, including historic preservation, archeological surveys and Section 106 compliance and curatorial operations.

The **Division of Resource Education** explains or interprets the Preserve's natural and cultural resources to the public. It coordinates cooperating association and the environmental education, special emphasis, volunteers-in-parks, and the Student Conservation Association programs. It produces interpretive planning documents such as visitor center exhibit plans, wayside exhibit plans and interpretive prospectuses. The division manages public information, media contacts, commercial film requests and information services through formal interpretive programs, and the operation of one visitor information station. It also is responsible for the park library.

The **Division of Resource and Visitor Protection** manages the Preserve's law enforcement, physical security, physical fitness, safety, and critical incident stress programs. It provides emergency medical services and other emergency operations such as search and rescue. The division works closely with other law enforcement agencies.

The **Division of Maintenance** plans, programs, and coordinates the overall maintenance and operation of park facilities and special projects. The Division constructs, maintains, or improves physical facilities (roads, trails, buildings, utilities and vehicles) and serves as the professional representative in matters concerning engineering, planning, design, construction and operation. The division has a close relationship with central offices and other government agencies such as the U. S. Public Health Service to assure that the maintenance and development programs are carried out in accordance with the Service-wide goals.

IV. KEY EXTERNAL FACTORS

While park management and staff can plan, manage, and largely control much of what occurs in the park, other things they can only influence, especially things external to park boundaries. Some things, such as natural events, they have no control over whatsoever. In developing Big Thicket National Preserve's *Strategic Plan* and its long-term goals, it was important to take into consideration key external factors that could negatively or positively affect goal outcomes. A few of the most important or most likely are identified briefly below. This is by no means an exhaustive list but simply those that are most likely to influence outcomes as viewed at the time of writing the plan.

Changing Demographics and Population Growth

Several changes in the country's demographics will affect the NPS as it enters the 21st century. These changes include the aging populations; continued immigration and subsequent increase of ethnic populations away from "traditional park users"; the geographic relocation of people; and an increase in the mobility of senior citizens, who have financial means to travel more.

With approximately 263 million people, the United States ranks as the world's largest nation behind China and India (NPS, 1998). The U.S. population is growing at a rate of over one percent per year or 2.7 million people each year. Texas became the second largest state in 1994, with 18.7 million people counted in 1995, and displayed a growth rate of two percent per year in the 1990s. Since 1945, the U.S. population has continued to move south where the weather is warmer. This trend is expected to continue, and California, Texas, and Florida are expected to contain about 45 percent of the total U.S. population growth by year 2020.

The Preserve is also within the exurbia (area just beyond suburbs of large cities) realm of Houston and adjacent to Dallas-Ft. Worth and San Antonio. Many have predicted a megalopolis development in Texas combining San Antonio, Houston, Beaumont, and Corpus Christi – which would place the Preserve within day's drive from the major concentration of Texas' 19.3 million people (1998 estimate). The Preserve is a short distance from Interstate 10. This is a major thoroughfare from the southeast part of the United States to the western part of the United States. This puts Big Thicket within a day drive (8 hours) from Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama, Biloxi, Mississippi, Pensacola, Florida, etc.

Besides the U.S. growing in overall population, we will diversify in race, age, ethnicity, and language. By 2030, the U.S. is expected to have over 70 million people over 65 years of age compared to 33 million in the mid-1990s. Similarly, children under 18 years of age are expected to increase from 66 million in the mid 1990s to 83 million in 2030.

These factors relate directly to Big Thicket National Preserve. As the U.S. population continues to age in greater numbers, we can expect this visitor segment to increase. This growing population, with its greater disposable income, longevity, and educational background, will translate to higher visitation figures for parks. This group will tend to arrive in larger recreation vehicles and demand greater visitor services many with mobility impairments will require accommodation.

Profound immigration and ethnic population demographic changes are taking place in the United States. Half of the nation's growth will come from recent immigrants (Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, etc) and minorities (American Indians, African-Americans, Hispanic, etc.) These groups will collectively exceed the Anglo population during the next century. This is an important issue because the white middle class segment of the population mainly has used parks historically, and parks have responded by mirroring this culture within its own ranks. It will be a challenge for park staff to help these visitors find cultural relevance in park resources, and to accommodate or welcome the type of use being sought.

Water Needs

Most units of Big Thicket National Preserve are within the Neches River watershed; however, one unit is within the Trinity River watershed. The preserve is a water dependent ecosystem; therefore, dependent on water quality, quantity, and timing of water flow. Water quality monitoring data indicate that declining dissolved oxygen levels may be a regional concern (Hall and Bruce 1996). Additionally, chlorides and fecal coliform levels, sulfate concentrations and total dissolved solids are of concern on several stream segments (Hall and Bruce 1996). Impaired water quality has effects on aquatic species and recreational opportunities in the Preserve (Harcombe and Calloway 1997).

Principal alterations to water flow result from 1) impoundment (dams), 2) diversions, and 3) timing of releases (Hall 1996). Changes in the duration and frequency of floods on the Neches River attributable to construction of the Rayburn/Steinhagen dams have resulted in changes in the species composition and distribution of floodplain forest communities (Hall 1996). Additionally, water diversions at the south end of the Preserve further alter volume of flows, which cause periodic saltwater intrusions. Saltwater intrusions can have a dramatic impact on aquatic and vegetation species within the Preserve. Permanent changes in the overall amounts and timing of stream flows may affect the stream corridors. Direct effects to habitat resources may include changes in channel morphology, rate of meandering, sedimentation, and water quality, and the amount and type of submerged habitat. Secondary effects to species resources may include changes in growth, mortality and regeneration of vegetation along the riparian corridor (Hall 1996).

V. STRATEGIC PLAN PREPARERS

The following park staff members were intimately and extensively involved in preparing this annual performance plan:

Richard Peterson, Superintendent
Lila Walker, Chief of Administration
Robert Valen, Chief, Resources Education
Dave McHugh, Acting Chief, Resource and Visitor Protection
Douglas Neighbor, Chief, Resources Management
Raymond Martinez, Chief of Maintenance

Prepared by Lila Walker, Chief of Administration and GPRA Coordinator

Appendix A.

Big Thicket National Preserve Annual Performance Work Plan for FY2002

** The Preserve was unable to append the worktables to this plan due to software and technical problems.

If you are reading this document on the NPS Performance Management Site and would like a copy of the Annual Performance Plan and Annual Work Plan, please send a message to the following internet address: bith_administration@nps.gov or write to the following address:

Big Thicket National Preserve
Attn: GPRA Coordinator
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