

# Northeast Region Resource Initiatives

## Communications Strategic Plan

Draft as of 1/28/2025

<p><b>Name of Issue/Event</b></p>	<p><b>Northeast Regional Office Resource Initiatives</b></p>
<p><b>Lead Staff and Roles</b></p>	<p>Jon Meade, Rachel Mazur – Identify goals and target audiences</p> <p>Brian Mitchell – Coordinate development of strategic plan and serve as program manager/ATR of communication agreement</p> <p>Comms Committee (Robin Baranowski, David Goldstein, Brian Mitchell, Bob Page, Ed Sharron) – Review goals and audiences and propose revisions, establish messages and potential communications approaches, review science communication products</p> <p>Cooperator (Ecological Society of America) - Assist regional staff with developing targeted communication products according to the goals and needs identified below</p>
<p><b>Situation Analysis</b></p> <p><i>(What is the background of this event/project/issue, the why/what/who/where/how. Are there overall goals for this event/project/issue? Are there deadlines or expectations from leadership or others that should be noted? Has this been done in the past? Include planning issues and any competing interests.)</i></p>	<p>The Northeast Region of the National Park Service is working to preserve and protect cultural and natural resources through several regional initiatives. With funding from the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, these initiatives are moving forward as a number of funded projects. Each initiative is working to bring the best available science and indigenous knowledge to bear on restoring or enhancing the resilience of cultural and natural resources entrusted to the National Park Service. The initiatives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vulnerability assessments and planning</b> – Identify infrastructure and resources threatened by increased temperatures and temperature variability, sea level rise, altered storm frequency and severity, hydrological changes, and other impacts of climate change along the coast and for interior parks (e.g., national battlefields), and assist park managers with making climate-smart management decisions.</li> <li>• <b>Two-eyed seeing</b> – Integrate indigenous knowledge into resource management throughout the region.</li> <li>• <b>Forest resilience</b> – Address impacts from invasive species and over-abundant deer that are creating regeneration debt in northeastern forests, and where necessary direct park forests towards a composition appropriate for the future.</li> <li>• <b>Grassland resilience</b> – Improve grassland ecological health by managing invasives and restoring native species, and where appropriate facilitating migration of species better adapted to expected future conditions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Salt marsh restoration</b> – Explore and implement strategies, ranging from restoration to marsh migration, for enhancing the resilience of coastal marshes and associated resources.</li> <li>• <b>Stream flow restoration</b> – Remove restrictions and barriers to stream flow to promote resilience, protect infrastructure, and allow fish passage for federally endangered Atlantic salmon and other species.</li> <li>• <b>Seagrass restoration</b> – Protect critical seagrass habitat by identifying genotypes resilient to expected future conditions and suitable for use in future seagrass restoration efforts across parks.</li> </ul> <p>Because of the high profile and impact of IRA and BIL projects aligned with these initiatives, the Northeast Region of the National Park Service wants to go beyond the basic communications (briefing statements, short web articles, and press releases) that are part of IRA-funded projects. Our overall goal is to engage key audiences to encourage broader participation in the initiatives and attract internal funding and external support.</p>
<p><b>Communications Goal(s)</b></p> <p><i>(Why are you communicating? How does communicating help the situation? What does success look like? Is it quantifiable? Note that “build awareness of…” is rarely a goal but if you ask the next question about why you want to build awareness, that can be a useful exercise in identifying goals.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communicate the initiatives and operationalize best practices</b> within the National Park Service. Success for this goal means regional and park staff are aware of projects associated with the initiatives and seek opportunities to collaborate in achieving the goals of the initiatives. Success may lead to additional parks using best practices, models, and results from initiative projects to implement similar efforts that enhance resilience to stressors.</li> <li>• <b>Inspire initiatives beyond the National Park Service</b> that support the adoption of best practices to restore ecosystems and enhance resilience to stressors. Success for this goal means that outside groups (other agencies, states, non-governmental organizations, communities, and tribes) are aware of NPS efforts, and may lead to their independently expanding the scope of the initiatives beyond park borders. It includes potential development of strategic partnerships that further the goals of the initiatives, such as co-stewardship with tribes and interagency collaboration.</li> <li>• <b>Demonstrate how the National Park Service is preserving and protecting resources</b> throughout the region. Success for this goal means a new cadre of resource stewards is aware of the NPS initiatives. This awareness may inspire them to act inside and outside of parks, which could lead to an increase in volunteers supporting resource stewardship and science within parks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Audience(s)</b></p> <p><i>(Who do you need to reach in order for your communications to successfully advance the goals of the event/project/issue? How do they get their information? What appeals to them? What other audiences are out there whose interests need to be considered?)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional program and park staff</b> are crucial to local decision-making that can further the regional initiatives. Park resource staff and leadership teams establish park priorities and decide whether to support regional initiatives. This audience can be reached through internal e-mails and Microsoft Teams with targeted content. They will be interested in successful approaches that enhance resource protection and resilience.</li> <li>• <b>Other government agencies</b> (federal, state, and tribes) are needed to scale up the regional initiatives beyond park boundaries. The initiatives will be most successful where they lead to concerted</li> </ul>

landscape-level action. Tribes, federal and state agencies (e.g., tribal reservations, USFWS refuges, NOAA estuarine research reserves, and state parks) are often adjacent to parks and have a substantial land base for additional action. Some members of this audience can be reached through existing collaborations and efforts (e.g., Chesapeake Bay and Delaware River landscape efforts, as well as the CESU network). Targeted outreach may be needed for some members of this audience. Other agencies will be interested in successful approaches that enhance resource protection and resilience, as well as in the potential synergistic effects of collaborating at the landscape scale.

- **Tribes** are the original stewards of all land within the region, with millennia of experience managing the resources. This audience will be able to provide Indigenous knowledges and insights that will enhance project success. This audience can be reached through the NPS tribal liaisons as well as through parks where there is an existing relationship with local tribes. Tribes want to ensure the protection of resources within their historic tribal boundaries, and they have an interest in actively co-stewarding resources with the NPS.
- **Communities** have a role in broadening participation in the resource initiatives. Local support from nearby towns and tribes makes it easier for parks to implement management actions to improve resource resilience, and are a potential source of technical assistance and experienced volunteers. This audience will likely require targeted outreach by parks. They will have varied interests, but many community members will appreciate park efforts to improve resource resilience so that they can continue enjoying the benefits of living near a park.
- **Non-government organizations** are a source of technical assistance and funding needed to support the initiatives. The National Park Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, park friends groups, and other organizations focused on resource management in a changing world are potential supporters of the regional initiatives. This audience will be reached primarily through targeted communications from regional staff. Their interests will vary, but broadly this audience is interested in enhancing resilience of resources that are close to their organization's mission.
- **Academic partners** are a source of expertise and technical assistance. They train the next generation of resource stewards and have a role in improving the methods and tools used by the initiatives as well as expanding their use outside of the National Park Service. They can be reached through the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit network, targeted outreach, professional societies, and at professional meetings. This audience is interested in applied research and testing new approaches for improving resource management outcomes.
- **Park Visitors** are a source of volunteers and community engagement. They get their information through park web sites, contact stations, interpretative programs, and the news media. They are interested in recreational opportunities and learning about cultural and natural resources stewarded by the parks. A subset of

	<p>visitors will be motivated by a desire to participate in resource protection, including the regional initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Media outlets</b> can provide publicity and education about the resource initiatives to diverse audiences. They can amplify communication about the initiatives and help the National Park Service disseminate the success of efforts to preserve and protect park resources. They can be reached through the regional communications team, and they are interested in positive stories demonstrating action to address problems facing parks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Messages</b></p> <p><i>(What messages advance your goals and how can you tailor the message(s) for your audience's (or audiences') interests? You might also have sub-messages. This content becomes the starting point for press releases, talking points, social media posts, and so on, which may require adapting your key messages for each platform's format and tone.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proactive</b> – The National Park Service is serious about addressing the threats of invasive species, urbanization, climate change, and other stressors on cultural and natural resources. While some changes are inevitable, our regional initiatives are a concerted effort and proactive response to these threats that will help us minimize their impacts.</li> <li>• <b>Transformative</b> – The regional initiatives are landscape-level, interdisciplinary, collaborative efforts designed to bring about transformational change for cultural and natural resource management as well as in how the National Park Service approaches complex problems.</li> <li>• <b>Inclusive</b> – The National Park Service is increasing our efforts to involve relevant communities in planning and management actions. The regional initiatives encourage participation from neighboring communities and Tribal Nations. We welcome the use of information from outside the agency in planning and management, including citizen science data and Indigenous knowledges.</li> <li>• <b>Transparent and comparable</b> – The National Park Service is committed to transparency. We will be open about our planning processes, share data and information, and produce timely products about the regional initiatives. Whenever possible our methods and data will be comparable with widely-used existing programs, in order to facilitate linking park data with data collected elsewhere in the region.</li> <li>• <b>Active stewardship</b> – The National Park Service engages in active stewardship that is needed to meet our mission to preserve cultural and natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations. The regional initiatives are designed to increase resilience and where necessary direct resources towards states where they can persist in the future conditions that are expected.</li> <li>• <b>Cost effective</b> – The regional resource initiatives are cost-effective and will result in significant action to enhance resilience and improve the status of critical resources. They will have landscape-level impacts that will provide ancillary benefits beyond park boundaries. The initiatives can be efficiently scaled up to reach additional parks as well as surrounding communities and protected areas.</li> </ul>

## Assets

*(What tools, assets, etc., do you have and/or need? This means people, places, stories, photos, videos, partners, collateral, etc. You may not know what you need at first, so this may be a later element to consider.)*

## People

- **WASO Natural Resources Office of Communications (NROC)** – Will provide press releases and a web page for each IRA project.
- **Regional Communications Program** – Able to contact various media outlets to pitch ideas for stories related to regional initiatives.
- **Internal Capacity** – NETN science communicator and regional project support biologist in NR Division have science communication expertise.
- **Cultural Resources Climate Program (WASO CR)** – Can provide technical support on cultural resource themes and products.
- **Climate Change Response Program (WASO NRSS)** – Can provide technical support on climate themes and products.
- **Climate Change Interpretive Group (national)** – Can distribute products to a wider audience, may be willing to review or provide technical assistance on interpretive products.
- **Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance / Wild & Scenic Rivers programs** – Can distribute products to a wider audience and engage with communities within landscapes and watersheds.
- **Park interpretive programs** – Provide local connections to park visitors and nearby communities.
- **WASO External and Legislative Affairs** – Opportunities to connect with national media, Department of the Interior leadership, and Congress.
- **Research Learning Centers** – Can provide technical expertise linking science, research, and science communication.
- **GIS Support** – Technical support for ArcGIS Online and GIS story maps is available through the regional GIS program and agreements with University of Rhode Island and North Carolina State University.

## Places and Stories

- **Parks with existing or new projects** that relate to the initiatives (including 10 IRA projects and 6 BIL-ER projects). Examples include Acadia sweetgrass, Cape Cod seagrass, Katahdin Woods and Waters fish passage, Appalachian park forest resilience, grassland restoration, multi-region forest resilience.

## Existing Tools

- **NPS.gov** – Public web site for NPS as a whole, as well as park-specific web sites
- **Teams/SharePoint** – Internal NPS collaboration tools
- **ArcGIS Online** – Platform for ArcGIS story maps and other GIS products
- **[History and Hope Toolkit](#)** – Tools and examples for interpreting climate change themes

## Partners

- **CESU network** – Source of interdisciplinary expertise in research, technical assistance, and education; includes over 500 partners academic, NGO, and other partners and 17 host universities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Other agencies</b> – USGS provides science support and expertise. Other land management agencies (e.g., NOAA, USFS, and USFWS) may be interested in participating in or expanding the regional initiatives.</li> <li>• <b>Landscape scale initiatives</b> – Collaborations already exist for supporting watershed-level resource protection for the Chesapeake and Delaware watersheds; these initiatives could be partners in promoting and expanding the regional initiatives.</li> </ul> <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IRA projects</b> have committed more than \$175K to support regional communication needs.</li> <li>• <b>Additional funding</b> may be available through the Northeast Region.</li> </ul>
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## Possible Communications Tools, Tactics, Options

Task/Tool	Description/Notes <i>(including link(s) to draft(s))</i>	Due Date / Lead
<b>Internal Communications</b>		
Overall coordination	A single individual lead and a backup/co-lead are needed that can be responsible for maintaining awareness of the range of projects and efforts, ensuring coordination, and minimizing duplication of effort.	Ongoing / Brian Mitchell (initially)
Coordination with WASO	Quarterly check-in with NPS Natural Resources Office of Communications to identify their plans for communicating IRA and BIL projects.	Ongoing / TBD
Briefing with regional communications staff	Quarterly briefing to regional communications team for use in their outreach and media relations work.	Ongoing / Brian Mitchell
Staff updates	Monthly to quarterly update on activity related to the initiatives, shared across CR and NR teams at staff meetings.	Ongoing / TBD
<b>Content Development</b>		
Short stories	Regularly develop new short-form content for web updates, social media, and other communications. This includes establishing expectations that each project and cooperator will provide periodic photos and content, and providing tips, guidance, and assistance for developing content. Potentially base	Monthly to semi-annually for each project / Project leads, project cooperators, external partner

Task/Tool	Description/Notes <i>(including link(s) to draft(s))</i>	Due Date / Lead
	timing on project milestones rather than a strict frequency. An external partner could assist by interviewing project staff and/or visiting and documenting field efforts.	
Long stories	Magazine articles and other in-depth formats provide interested audiences with more complete information and resources than short-form content. This can facilitate expansion of initiatives beyond the NPS.	TBD / TBD
<b>Media Relations</b>		
News stories and articles	The regional communications team is willing to pitch ideas to media outlets (e.g., regional news media, National Public Radio). Together with comms, select which stories are coming up first and the most appropriate audiences for them.	Quarterly / TBD
<b>Web / NPS.gov</b>		
Public web site	<p>Single site for all regional initiatives, with an overview and a page for each initiative. Initiative pages would highlight products/stories associated with each. On SharePoint (Region 1 audience), InsideNPS (NPS audience) or Region 1 website (publicly accessible). Contact John Warren about posting content and/or CMS author rights.</p> <p>Potentially an NPS site, but need to resolve who will need to edit and have access, their capacity to manage the task, and limitations of content management system.</p> <p>Potentially a partner site (e.g., part of URI's CESU web site). Concerns about loss of access, less NPS branding, need for NPS to have long-term ability to manage site.</p> <p>An external partner will likely be needed to develop and organize content for the site.</p>	Quarterly / TBD
Internal SharePoint site	Only if there are internal communication and collaboration needs not met through public site. The	TBD / TBD

Task/Tool	Description/Notes <i>(including link(s) to draft(s))</i>	Due Date / Lead
	collaboration benefits would not be available to partners.	
<b>Social Media</b>		
Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram	Contact Jason Wickersty for list of social media account managers for Northeast Region parks and programs. Regularly provide new and relevant content to account managers for them to share. Promote coordinated release of content across multiple accounts and platforms and use of hashtags to link related efforts; work with John Warren to coordinate with WASO Comms as needed..	Monthly to semi-annually for each project / Project leads, project cooperators, external partner
Blogs	Blog-style content may help engage some audiences, particularly while field work is occurring.	TBD / TBD
<b>Multimedia</b>		
Videos	High-quality videos are an effective way to get information out and can be relevant for several years. An initial video could introduce the regional initiatives and projects associated with them as an integrated approach to resource management. As initiatives progress, additional videos can highlight them in more depth. Jason Wickersty, NER Visual Information Specialist, would be the initial contact.	TBD / External partner
ArcGIS story maps	Story maps provide framework for transforming maps and GIS data into engaging stories. An initial high-level story map for the regional initiatives (e.g., introducing the initiatives and the parks/projects) can be supplemented with additional maps about specific projects.	TBD / External partner
<b>Academic Outreach</b>		
Journal articles	Peer-reviewed journal articles are an important way to reach academic audiences. New scientific	TBD / NPS staff and project cooperators



<b>Task/Tool</b>	<b>Description/Notes</b> <i>(including link(s) to draft(s))</i>	<b>Due Date / Lead</b>
	research and science-based management efforts are suitable for journal articles.	
Presentations	Presentations of scientific research and management efforts at professional society annual meetings are another way to reach academic audiences.	TBD / NPS staff and project cooperators