

North American Paleontological Conference

Break-Out Session Notes

June 22, 2009

I Paradigm Shift- Help Big Bone State Park reach its full potential

- ***Review mission of Big Bone Park***

This process would include sitting down with local and state park officials so that it becomes possible to arrive at a consensus on updating the Park's mission statement to promote Big Bone Lick's prominence in the archeological and paleontological fields.

- ***Need a major draw at the park***

Several people made a comment that nothing seems to 'stand out', especially at the Visitor Center, as a draw for the Park's pre-history notoriety. Suggestions were made regarding the development of plaster castes of some of the bones housed perhaps at Monticello, Paris, University of Nebraska, Cincinnati Museum Center.

- ***Show that the park's prominence would improve profitability to other local areas***

1. In order for local and state officials to become truly interested in developing BBP as a major attraction, proof of this possibility must be developed. Counting visitors, having an electronic device for several months or a year that would count cars as they enter the park, and/or getting public response about the park would develop a basis from which to understand how the park is used.
2. Since Kentucky Parks are viewed as revenue generating facilities, how can the information about who comes to the park and why (as well as how many) be used to develop the park's revenue earning capacity?
3. Do a feasibility study to determine the value of the park as a local draw, especially if it is to be developed as a significant pre-historical/ historical site.
4. Discussion of the value of intellectual revenue vs. economic revenue
5. Remove mental block @ Frankfort about BBP and its proximity to Cincinnati

- ***Contact local legislators with the following information:***

1. Daily count of people coming to the park (use hand or road counter)
2. Connect the educational capacity of the park to local schools as well as how the historical and pre-historical background could affect learning and test scores.
3. Legislators value economic revenue, but what about intellectual revenue? Make a case for the intellectual revenue of the park.

- ***Strengthen the partnership between the Cincinnati Museum Center and BBP as well as Northern Kentucky University and BBP.***
 1. Could the Center be the curator and depositor of what is or has been excavated?
 2. Could the Museum Center and/or NKU refine the displays at the Visitor's Center and help with the content of the Nature Center?

II Educational interest as a drawing card

- ***Science and knowledge are dynamic. How does BBP make this appealing?***

As recently as August 2008, a dig was done at the park and revealed an interesting area where bison had been slaughtered and butchered by Native Americans (most likely Fort Ancient Indians) in the creek bed. The crude implements left behind made this a rare find, for it showed the interaction of man and beast. Why can't an ongoing dig be allowed at the park so that visitors can see why BBP is significant? This would open up a new avenue for educating students and the general public. Perhaps the public can be engaged in the dig process and in doing so learn about the significance of the area.
- ***Improve the use of FOBB Educational Kits***
 1. Tie in FOBB Educational Kits to the mailings Todd Young sends out to the schools
 2. Tie in elements of BBP kits to the elements of science as they relate to state required testing.
 3. Make educational kits more teacher-friendly by doing the following:
 - Be able to download kits
 - Create teacher material so that students can be prepped before coming to the park
 - FOBB website can create links to BBP information as well as educational material such as handouts, power-point presentations, film clips

III Activities to attract people to BBP

- ***Fossil tours***

Create monthly tours (weather permitting) along the creek bed while educating the people involved about the pre-history of the park. When items are discovered, have them brought back to the Nature Center where they can be cleaned and identified.

- ***Todd Young's summer programs (Back to the Wilds) could be enlarged.***
 Since Fort Ancient Indian sites have been discovered at BBP, perhaps Native American history and habits can be covered in addition to the hands-on of flint-knapping, etc.
 Have Todd present these Back to the Wilds skills at the Burlington library in conjunction with FOBB as an educational outreach program once or twice a year.
- ***The need for seasonal workers and docent volunteers***
 The Museum Center could work with BBP to run a seasonal worker's training session
 Museum Center could work with BBP and FOBB to create a docent program
- ***Have a contest to create a state vertebrate fossil (e.g. mastodon).***
 1. A teacher from New Haven Middle School got her students involved in a letter-writing campaign when BBP was nominated as a potential National Natural Landmark. Their letters made a difference in helping BBP earn this recent award.
 2. Wouldn't a state-wide contest create public interest, especially among middle school students, and thus bring more notoriety to the park?
- ***Newsletter***
 FOBB has a website, does BBP? If so how is it organized and run? Would this be a potential site where interested archeologists and paleontologists can run copies of their papers about Big Bone? Could FOBB run its site in conjunction with BBP?
- ***Plan a major draw on a yearly basis or within the Visitor's Center***
 1. Review how the Salt Fest, held in October, could grow in size and draw people down to BBP. Make this event a major attraction.
 2. Once the Visitor's Center is refurbished, a yearly display unique to the Park could be shown for a specific amount of weeks/months. Figure out when the largest crowds come to the Park and have this yearly event occur at that time.
- ***Develop marketing strategies through the internet***
 1. This item might best be handled in conjunction with a feasibility study so that as those involved review whether or not BBP could be a major attraction, marketing ideas are developed at the same time.
 2. Promote the events held at the Park (e.g. Bad-to-the-Bone Duathlon, Great Outdoor Weekend).
 3. Work with the local Chamber of Commerce, representatives from the Museum Center, and BBP to develop a marketing strategy for the Park.

4. Could the pre-historic significance be presented as an alternative to the Creationist Museum, or promoted in such a way that people who visit both sites could be informed about the creationist and evolution theories ?

IV Creation of a Scientific Advisory Board

- Interested local, national, and international scientists could form a scientific advisory board that would lend credibility when the park applied for grants
- If this board is approved by the state, a clear mission and goals will be established.
- This advisory board could also help gain a National Science Foundation Grant
- Currently this Foundation is interested in projects that deal with late Pleistocene Era animals due to the current climate changes throughout the world.

V Big Bone Lick Visitor Center

- What works
 1. The mastodon skeleton
- What doesn't work
 1. Incorrect labeling of displays
 2. Bland design of the building. Center has to have a flow that reveals each part of the Big Bone story
 3. No video or overview that explains the significance of the park
 4. There is nothing in the way of context so that visitors know why this area is significant
 5. No signage that ties in to the context of the park. Turn trail into a time-line to emphasize the pre-historic and historic significance of the park.
 6. Need periodic walking tours so that visitors have an opportunity to understand the park's significance.
 7. Need some of the bones and the environment surrounding the bones.
 8. Develop an exhibit of the recent bison bone bed excavated by the Cincinnati Museum Center
 9. Educate the Kentucky Parks system about Big Bone
 10. What is the mission of Kentucky Parks and Recreation?
 11. Use bathrooms as educational facilities