

Washington Crossing State Park Nature/Interpretive Center Management Plan



Introduction

The Washington Crossing Nature/Interpretive Center (IC) is located in the NJ Division of Parks and Forestry Central Region's Washington Crossing State Park, (WCSP) in Titusville, NJ. It is one of several full-time, year-round NJ state park and forest interpretive centers in which the primary focus is interpretation of the natural environment. The IC is staffed by one full-time Resource Interpretive Specialist I (naturalist) and normally one part/full time seasonal interpreter during the summer. The facility operates Wednesdays through Sundays year-round. The IC is funded in the WCSP general operating budget and annually receives some monetary support in the form of grants from the Washington Crossing Association of NJ (a friends group). The IC also occasionally receives support in the form of community service grants from local corporations such as Janssen Pharmaceutica, Titusville. Additionally, the IC is sometimes the recipient of small donations from groups who have participated in its programs. The IC generates some funds internally through nominal program cover charges to defray expenses for equipment and supplies utilized in the delivery of certain programs.

Significant Natural Interpretive Resources

The Nature/Interpretive Center is located in the 148 Acre Washington Crossing Natural Area in Washington Crossing State Park. The plant cover of WCSP consists of a roughly equal combination of early growth old fields interspersed with second growth forests. The Delaware River, the Delaware and Raritan Feeder Canal, the Steele Run and its tributaries all traverse the park. Additionally, two small ponds are available for use on the park's northern (Church Rd) boundary. WCSP is situated on the Mercer County section of the Piedmont physiographic province and is underlain mostly by the Passaic formation (formerly known as the Brunswick formation). The topography is flat to very gently rolling and rises to a maximum elevation of about 220 ft. The park's soils consist mainly of the Bucks-Penn Association of silt loams and shaley loams. The natural area is infiltrated with a network of trails which are easily accessible from the Interpretive Center building and parking area.

WCSP supports an interesting assortment of plants and animals. This includes stands of mixed hardwoods, red cedar forests, sugar maple forests, plantings of eastern white pine, Japanese larch, Norway spruce, and red pine. A variety of spring and summer wildflowers can be found throughout the park and many native and introduced grasses dominate its fields. Among the most notable species of wildlife observable in WCSP are whitetail deer, beaver, (in the river and canal) great-horned owl, screech owl, long-eared owl, red-tailed hawk, red-shouldered hawk and eastern bluebird. The enclosed checklists will provide a more inclusive record of flora and fauna which have been reported to date in WCSP.

Existing Facilities

Washington Crossing State Park's nature/environmental interpretation efforts are centralized in the Nature/Interpretive Center building. In 1997 this facility replaced the former Burkert residence, a Depression Era farm house that had been retrofitted to serve as the state park's Nature Center in the early 1960s. The Nature/Interpretive Center is a 1700 sq. ft. wheelchair-accessible single-story frame structure with a single main exhibit room, a multi-purpose room, an office/workshop area with a staff lavatory a utility room and two single-use visitor rest rooms which are accessible from the outside of the building.

The building's main exhibit floor contains a number of permanent interactive exhibits whose theme affirms a local biodiversity predicated on landscape change induced by both civilization and nature. The main exhibit is a four station diorama with button-activated voice tracks depicting an area of the park along the Delaware River as it would have appeared at four different periods in history. The exhibit also contains numerous natural and historic artifacts relative to the eras highlighted. A visitor computer station comprised of two computers that run software including multimedia nature programs, games and other interchangeable information. Six component identification light boards quiz visitors' knowledge of native and naturalized local flora and fauna. A large three dimensional relief map of the park displays the park's various facilities, roads, trails, terrain and vegetative cover. A rotating panel emphasizes material cycles in the

environment. The most popular exhibit in the building is a live observation honeybee hive in which visitors can view the insects as they enter, exit and go about their business in the nest.

The multipurpose room serves as a classroom and meeting place for a maximum of about thirty visitors as they participate in various interpretive programs such as slide and video presentations, lectures, demonstrations and craft programs. The multipurpose area also contains many temporary exhibits such as live turtles, snakes, pond animals, insects etc. Additionally, the room displays various artifact collections, and contains numerous books, magazines, charts, posters, interchangeable display boards, games, puzzles, models, a "touch table," and a small lounge area situated adjacent some windows which overlook an active outdoor feeding station.

An interpretive pavilion lies roughly one hundred feet to the south of the Nature/Interpretive Center and shares the IC parking area. The pavilion is an open-sided structure containing picnic tables and a wood burning unit which is used exclusively for maple sugar processing during the winter season. The pavilion is used as an outdoor meeting place for interpretive programs especially craft programs where spills and large amounts of generated refuse would be a problem in the IC multipurpose room. The pavilion also serves as a nonreservable family picnic area when it is not being used for programs.

Visitation

The IC provides four basic visitor services:

- A) formal interpretive programs for families and individuals as per schedule and programs for groups as per arrangement
- B) informal visitation of the Interpretive Center and its interior exhibits
- C) visitation of the natural area grounds and trails
- D) a quarterly newsletter mailing

The following charts and histograms will present the various visitor use patterns associated with the Nature Interpretive Center:

Program Attendance- This is the total number of visitors participating in formal public and group programs sponsored by the IC staff and/or its volunteers. These figures are derived by actually counting visitors participating in the various interpretive programs each time such a program is delivered.

Walk-through Visitation- This is the number of visitors passing through the IC in order to view its exhibits, who have **not** participated in formal IC programs on the day they were counted. These figures are derived daily from data on an electronic counter located at the building's main entrance which registers a count each time people enter and exit the building.

Total Attendance- This is the sum of program and walk-through attendance. This figure accounts for total visitor use of the facility during a given period of time.

Interpretive/ Nature Center Total Visitation

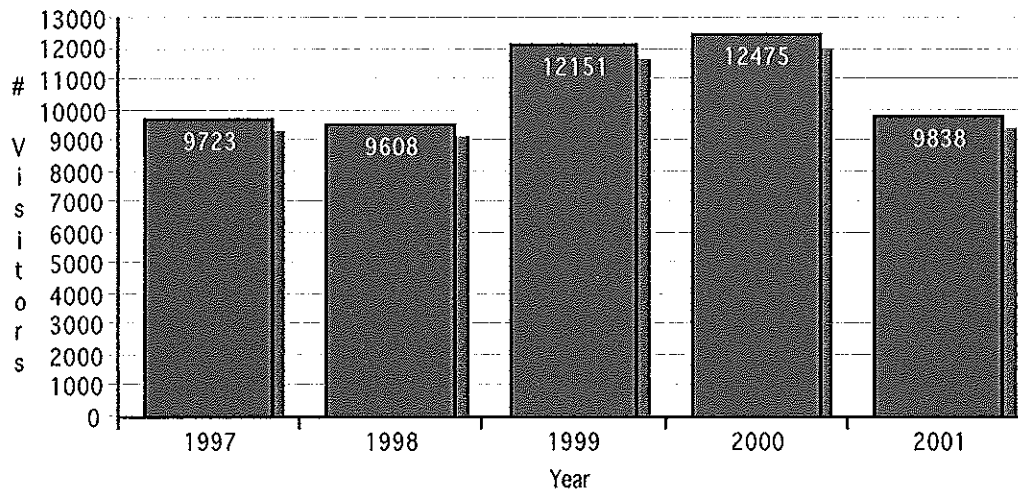


Figure 1 This histogram charts total visitation at the Nature/Interpretive Center over a five year period from 1997 - 2001.

Interpretive/ Nature Center Walk-through and Program Visitation

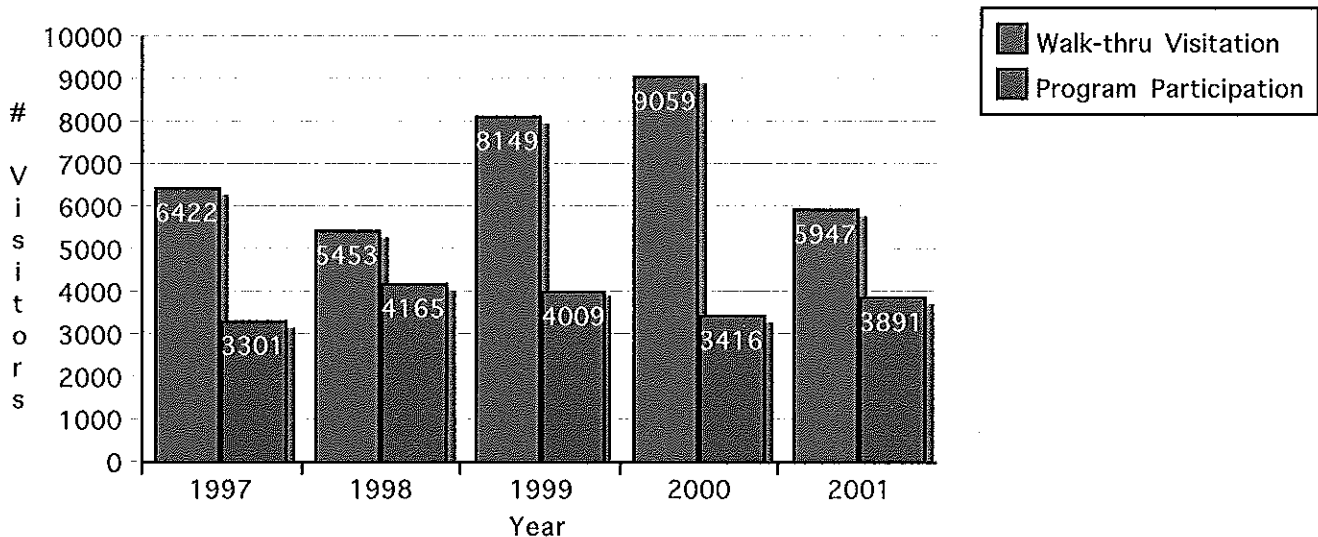


Figure 2 This histogram breaks down walk-through visitation and attendance at the Nature/Interpretive Center over a five year period from 1997 - 2001.

The histograms in figures 1 and 2 indicate a fairly consistent flow of between 9,000 and 10,000 visitors for the five year period in question. Program attendance fluctuates between about 3300 and 4200. The spike in total and walk-through visitation observed in the years 1999 and 2000 is probably attributable to exceptionally pleasant weekend weather during the early spring and mid-autumn of those years. Week-

end weather tends to impact walk through visitation in the short term, more than any other factor. Unusually pleasant weather will draw throngs of visitors to the facility in spring and fall. Conversely, overcast skies, rain or even a light sprinkle will dramatically tend to keep visitors away as will unusually severe winter weather. Program visitation on the other hand, is less affected by pleasant weather as all programs are booked weeks or months in advance when the day's weather can not be anticipated. Prolonged periods of inclement weather can result in sharp declines in program visitation if programs are canceled in significant numbers and can not be rescheduled for one reason or another.

Where the Visitors Come From

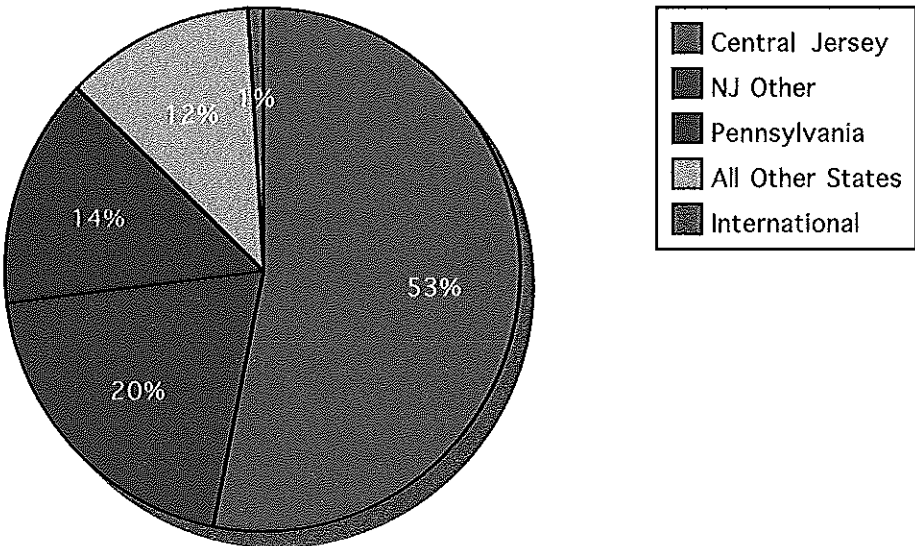


Figure 3 This pie chart indicates the place of residence of visitors to the Nature/Interpretive Center. This information was obtained from some 1200 visitors who signed the IC visitor guest book upon entering the building in the year 2001. Group attendance was screened from this accounting so that the figure represents **walk-through attendance only**. Note that the 1200 visitor sample who signed the guest book only represents about 20% of the total walk-through attendance for that year.

Figure 3 indicates that about three quarters of the facility's walk-through visitation comes from within the state of New Jersey with more than half the total originating in the central portion of the state. Pennsylvania predictably also provides a significant portion of visitors (14%) with proximity to Philadelphia's northern suburbs just across the river from the park in Bucks County. States in the US, other than New Jersey and Pennsylvania collectively provide 12% of the facility's visitation with international visitors making up about 1% of the total. Casual observation of visitor traffic in the building would suggest that international visitation is actually somewhat higher than 1%. In fact, a group of about 5-6 Europeans walked in as these figures were being tallied. They did not register in the visitor log. Foreign visitors from England, Europe and Asia frequently attend interpretive programs and often approach IC staff with questions about the park. Perhaps, many of these international visitors are temporarily in the US, for educational purposes at one of the area's many colleges and universities. Or, perhaps many are in the area on job-related assignments. Such visitors might be under represented in our records when they log a temporary local address in the registration book rather than a permanent foreign address.

Visitors/Groups that attended IC Programs in 2001

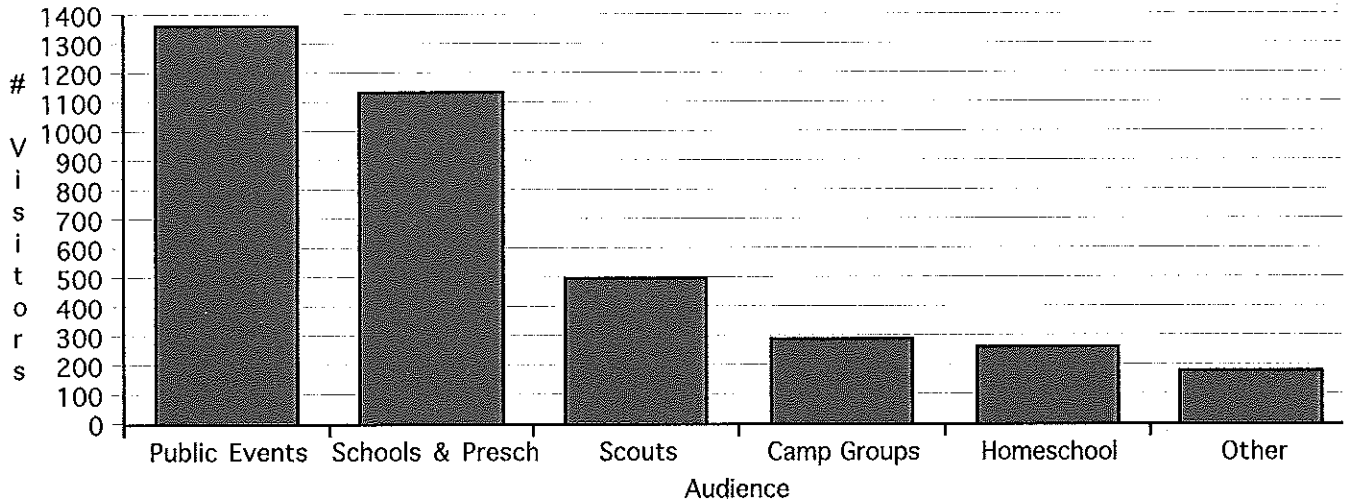


Figure 4 The graph directly above breaks down the IC annual program attendance for 2001 in terms of the circumstances in which visitors attended. Public events would include attendance at programs which were open to the public and which were advertised in our newsletter events schedule as well as the local media. These attendees would include general park visitors. The other categories represent visitors who attended interpretive programs exclusively with a specific organization such as school and preschool classes, scout groups, etc. the category entitled “other” pertains to program visitation such as religious groups and community organizations that did not fit the preceding categories.

Interpretive programs at the IC are available both to the general public and to specific organizations who make “field trips” to WCSP for the purpose of attending an exclusive program intended to meet a particular need or requirement of the group. Figure 4 indicates that the majority of program attendees come to the IC in order to participate in public events which are publicly announced and open to all families and individuals. Although groups such as scouts sometimes attend these programs, they are encouraged to call the facility and make separate arrangements to come out for instruction at a different but mutually agreeable time. This policy maximizes the opportunities for the general public to participate while meeting the specific needs of organizations. The next largest category of program attendees are schools and preschools which supplied over 1100 program visitors in 2001. This category includes public and private schools, nursery schools and day care facilities both secular and faith-based in origin. Most of the visitation in this category is comprised of K-4 elementary school students. Although programs for higher grade levels are available, such groups rarely come out. The Interpretive Center offers activities that address many of the New Jersey DOE Core Curriculum Content Standards. Scout groups make up another major portion of the facility’s program attendance. This would mostly entail Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups but would also include scouting-type organizations that are religious in nature or associated with various community groups. The Interpretive Center offers programs specifically intended to meet badge requirements at the Cub Scout (Webelos) and Brownie Girl Scout Level. Camp groups largely take the place of schools during the months of July and August. Homeschool networks have also always been an important source of both program as well as casual visitation. Visitors attending public events at the IC tend to fit the profile of the Figure 3 pie chart and in fact, are more likely to sign the visitor log from which the data was collected, than are casual visitors to the facility. Group program participants however, come almost exclusively from the central New Jersey area. Travel time and expense for buses and other transportation as well as other logistical limitations preclude all but only an occasional group from the northern and southern ends of the state or from across the river in Pennsylvania. Normally, , between 180 and 190 interpretive programs are delivered at the IC each year.

Year 2000 IC Walk-through / Program Visitation by Month

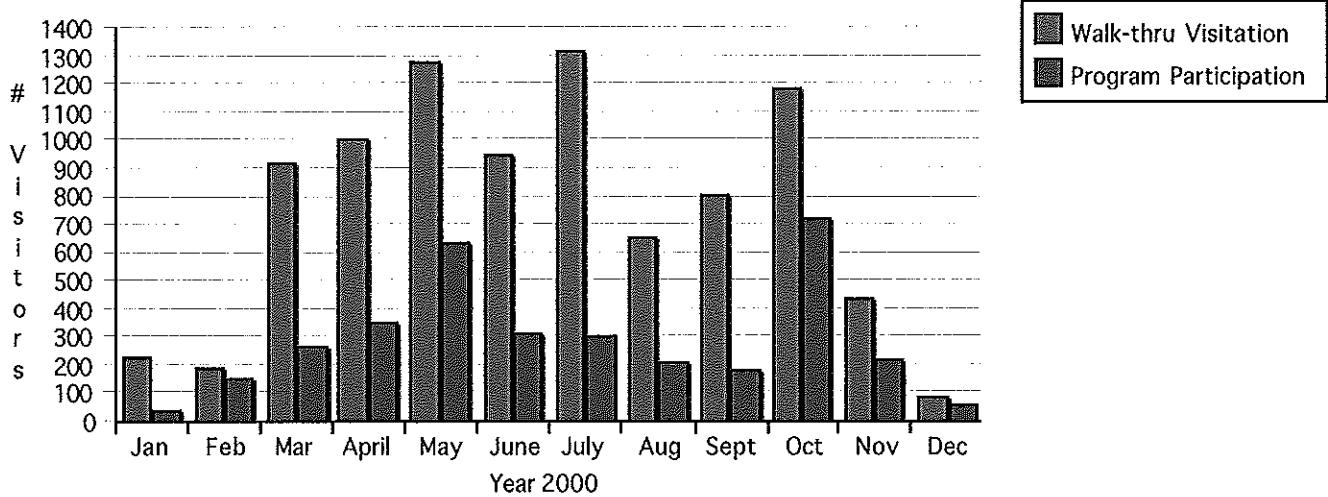


Figure 5 Histogram displays patterns of visitor use of the Nature/Interpretive Center in the year 2000.

Year 2001 IC Walk-through / Program Visitation by Month

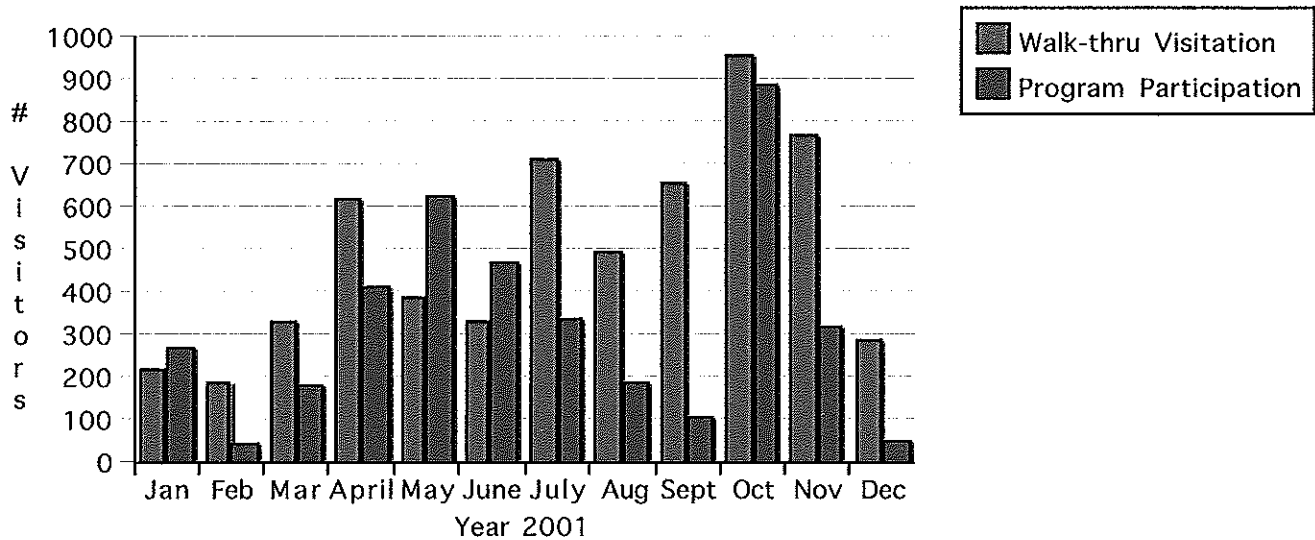


Figure 6 Histogram displays patterns of visitor use of the Nature/Interpretive Center in the year 2001

The visitor use histograms in figures 5 and 6 indicate a double peak in visitation at the Interpretive Center. The first peak of the year falls in the late spring and early summer followed by a decline in visitation during the summer months. This decline in summer program attendance is attributed to the fact that schools and most scout groups recess for the season. Visitation picks up in September and again peaks in October and early November during the fall foliage season. Visitation then declines as the holidays approach and it falls into a lull during the early weeks of winter and midwinter after which it again rises. The obvious trend is that IC attendance is determined by weather and climatic patterns which reflect the most comfortable times of the year for visitors to be outdoors.

Interpretive Goals and Objectives

I. Interpretive Mission and Goals

Our purpose is to arouse our visitor's curiosity and inspire his or her natural sense of wonder for the created world as portrayed in Washington Crossing State Park, in order to promote a perception of respect, responsibility and reverence toward the state park and ultimately the natural environment at large.

II. Interpretive Objectives

A) Information to be Communicated to Visitors

1. The park and natural environment at large is made up of renewable and non-renewable resources.
2. All living and nonliving components are interconnected in some way.
3. All life has basic needs which must be met by the environment.
4. Humans respond to the same environmental factors as other organisms including over population disease, pollution, and habitat loss.
5. All components of the environment including those contained in the park work together as an interactive whole.
6. Historic knowledge can help solve present environmental problems and help prevent future ones.

B) Attitudes and Values to be Cultivated Among Visitors

1. We are all stewards of the earth and thus the park.
2. The natural environment needs to be cherished, conserved, and wisely managed.
3. Our behaviors and lifestyle should be compatible with the integrity of the natural environment.
4. Wise utilization of all natural resources including those represented in WCSP will assist in assuring that the park and the environment at large will help serve and support future generations.

C) Skills to be Passed onto Visitors

1. Identify the park's various communities and some of their most obvious interrelated components.
2. Differentiate between environmentally constructive and destructive behaviors while in WCSP or elsewhere.
3. Take positive action to resolve and prevent personal conflicts with the environment especially when visiting the state parks.

III. Interpretive Themes

A) The Living Environment

1. Plants
2. Animals Autecology/Synecology
3. Protists

- B) The Nonliving Environment
 - 1. Water
 - 2. Air, weather, climate, microclimate
 - 3. Soil
 - 4. Rocks
 - 5. Minerals
- C) Change
 - 1. Rhythms
 - a. circadian
 - b. monthly
 - c. seasonal
 - 2. Succession
 - a. primary
 - b. secondary
 - 3. Aging
 - 4. Man-induced change
 - 5. Random change
- D) Recycling
 - 1. Water cycle
 - 2. Geochemical cycles
 - 3. Carbon cycle
- E) Energy Flow
 - 1. Sun
 - 2. Trophic structure
 - a. food chains/webs
 - b. primary productivity
 - 3. Population dynamics/Interrelationship
 - a. trophic pyramids/predator-prey interactions
 - b. life tables/population group
 - c. survival strategies
 - d. carrying capacity/limiting factors
 - e. other synecological concepts
- F) Resource Utilization
 - 1. How does man impact his environment
 - a. choices
 - b. issues
 - c. questions

Implementation

As mentioned earlier in this document, the IC provides four basic primary services as a strategy in order to fulfill the facility's stated mission.

I. Formal Interpretive Programs

- A. Public programs - Interpretive programs offered mostly to families and individuals as scheduled in the IC newsletter and as advertised in the local media.
- B. Group programs - Interpretive programs offered to organizations such as schools, scouts, preschools, youth groups, religious groups, community groups, homeschool organizations, etc. by special arrangement.

II. The Nature /Interpretive Center-Open for Casual (walk-through) Visitation (hours: Wed-Sat 9:00 - 4:00; Sun 12:00 - 4:30)

- A. The interior exposition - interprets natural objects, naturalistic phenomena and concepts (relevant to WCSP) to walk-through visitors and program participants on a self-guiding basis.
 - 1. Promotes theme of biodiversity
 - 2. Promotes theme of change in nature
 - 3. Promotes theme of people (history) interacting with the environment
- B. Literature - handouts and postings of information-includes brochures, maps, checklists relevant to WCSP as well as a bulletin board display with information about this park and other organizations dealing with matters of the environment
- C. Inquiry service
 - 1. walk-in - visitors may ask questions about the park or describe natural objects to a staff member for identification and/or additional information
 - 2. phone-in - people may call in to inquire about various naturalistic phenomena or ask how to deal with minor nature related problems.
- D. Nature library - a collection of books, field guides, magazine articles, current event articles software and environmental education activities and curricula are available for use on the premises by visitors.
- E. IC feeding station - A collection of active bird feeders overlooked by the triple window in the front of the multipurpose room. Stocked with feed year-round.

III. Natural Area Grounds and Trails

- A. Color coded Nature/Interpretive Center walking trails
 - 1. Red Trail
 - 2. Green Trail
 - 3. White Trail
 - 4. Blue Trail
 - 5. Ewing Trail
 - 6. Handicapped Trail (to be developed)
 - 7. Self-Guiding Trail - a 1/4 mile trail with ten station markers and various naturalistic objects, events and phenomena along the trail as interpreted in Self Guiding Trail brochure
- B. Wildlife Blind - A 12' X 10' structure with viewing slots overlooking a winter feeding station

IV. Nature/Interpretive Center Newsletter *Nature's Grapevine*, the IC's seasonal newsletter, includes nature related articles, information about WCSP and a three month schedule of public interpretive programs at the IC. *Nature's Grapevine* is mailed out four times per year to interested people free of charge. It is also available to pick up in the IC.

Partnerships

The Nature/Interpretive Center relies on a variety of informal partnerships in order to implement its mission amidst a climate of limited state resources. These partnerships provide assistance in the form of finances, personnel and material. The groups and organizations that provide this assistance are listed below in alphabetical order:

Amateur Astronomy Association of Princeton AAAP has a lease agreement with the state which permits the group to operate a small astronomical observatory located adjacent to the IC grounds in WCSP. This agreement stipulates that the club provide occasional public programming in the park. Vic Belanger, an active member of AAAP delivers an impressive five session seminar in amateur astronomy at the IC each autumn for park visitors.

Boy Scouts of America Scouts from troops mostly within the local Central New Jersey Council frequently come out to the park to undertake general service projects and Eagle Scout projects. Projects completed by scouts in WCSP in recent years include construction of a wildlife/bird observation blind, construction and installation of numerous wildlife nesting structures, construction of trail bridges, development and reclamation of trails, construction of a landscaped wildlife observation and feeding station, installation of a wildlife feeding station and track pit and other assorted projects.

Interpretive Center Visitors Organizations that participate in Interpretive Center programs sometimes make modest monetary contributions to the IC. The IC is also occasionally the recipient of gifts and memorial donations on the behalf of visitors. Visitors also sometimes make contributions of materials, equipment and supplies. The facility has received donations of books, software and other instructional media, birdseed and feeders, fish tanks and aquarium supplies as well as craft supplies and expendable educational materials.

Interpretive Center Volunteers A handful of dedicated volunteers are available to help out with various projects. Some deliver interpretive programs. Some assist with such programs. Some volunteers simply staff the facility so as to free up permanent staff for other responsibilities. Some volunteers write newsletter articles and some assist with trail maintenance as well as a variety of projects and chores.

Janssen Pharmaceutica Janssen, located in Hopewell Twp., about two miles from the park has been a generous neighbor. The company has funded general environmental education equipment, computer equipment, new furniture and audiovisual equipment for the IC over the past several years. These community service grants from Janssen are usually channeled through our 501(c)(3) friends group, the Washington Crossing Association, who then purchase the equipment for the Nature/Interpretive Center. Janssen also provides ongoing support for our newsletter as well as our in-house publications by providing photocopying services free of charge

Lithic and Primitive Technologies This company operated by Jim Silk of Mercerville, NJ has provided numerous interpretive programs in flintknapping and other primitive living techniques. Jim organized Primitive Technology Weekends at the IC in the autumns of 1999, 2000 and 2001. These events feature several volunteers who come in for the weekend, set up shop and demonstrate a variety of skills such as

flintknapping, cordage craftsmanship, primitive weapons construction, fire by friction, tracking and many other aboriginal skills and technologies. Primitive Technologies Weekend draw numerous visitors and Mr. Silk has expressed an interest in continuing to organize these events.

The Washington Crossing Association of New Jersey This officially recognized friends group administers the park's Open Air Theatre and generates funds, some of which are annually granted directly to the IC in support of its various services. Additionally, the WCA maintains a joint checking account with the Nature/Interpretive Center which provides an avenue for petty cash purchases as well as a place to park donations and other funds that come to the IC.

Needs/Issues

The WCSP Nature/Interpretive Center has come a long way since the last revision of this document in 1993. At the time, the operation was based in an old farm house that was completely inadequate for that which the building was being used. All of the facility's exhibits were homemade. The newsletter and other publications were being produced with a typewriter and a mimeograph machine. The only computer services that were available at the time were provided by the personal machines of staff and volunteers at their residences. Access to the facility was precarious at best, over a rutted, potholed Brickyard Rd that was barely wide enough to accommodate a school bus. and which could not be easily plowed in the wintertime. Well, the computers and printers came first via the generosity of some of the partnership organizations and the quality of the publications were upgraded. Shortly thereafter, scoping meetings were held for the construction of a new climate-controlled building and the design of a professional permanent exhibition. Within a couple of years after the building and exhibits were completed, work was begun on upgrading the access road and parking lot. In 2000 the IC pavilion was added to augment the program space of the new building. All of these upgrades have provided a clear improvement in the services being offered to visitors in Washington Crossing State Park. Also, the new facilities better display a caring professional image of the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry, one that welcomes visitors and affirms their importance as well as the necessity of quality natural resource interpretive programs. Problems, however, persist. Some of these problems are old ones which for one reason or another, were not resolved with the new facilities. Others have developed as a consequence of them. Below is a list of needs and issues that ought to be resolved as WCSP endeavors to improve its services to the public.

Additional professional staff needed With only one full-time employee, the IC must frequently close down to casual visitors during programs and while regular staff are occupied elsewhere in the park. Also, programs must sometimes be canceled in the event of a staff illness or other necessary absences. A bare minimum of two full-time employees is needed to adequately supervise the building and insure security, to keep the facility open during normal operating hours and to take full advantage of all available program time slots. A third or fourth staff member would make it possible to operate (as the park does) on a seven day schedule. Additional staff would enable an expansion in the number and variety of programs by making simultaneous offerings possible and would enable an expansion of volunteerism and public relations efforts.

Expand the multipurpose room The multipurpose room (classroom) provides a vast improvement over the sit-on-the-floor arrangements of the old Nature Center. However, the room is still inadequate for the occupancy of a class-sized group. Participants need to be packed much too tightly for comfort during indoor presentations and craft programs, and the numbers of participants often needs to be restricted well below the demand for some programs so that the room is not too crowded. The building was reduced in length during scoping from its originally planned 70 ft. in order to keep the project on budget. That space needs to be restored.

New visitor computers The visitor computers are among the most heavily used exhibits on the floor by both casual and program visitors. These machines are loaded with games, photographs, nature sounds, video clips and a variety of text data on just about any nature-related subject a visitor might want information on. There are however, some problems associated with the machines. The monitors are poorly designed and pressure or tension on the signal cables causes the color tint to become greatly distorted on both units. Moreover, the CD drive on one of the machines frequently malfunctions and the floppy drive on both machines are temperamental. The processors are dated and will not run the latest software. Lastly, both computers are underequipped with RAM at only 8Mb each. Although new monitors would make the machines functional, a more cost effective and better long range solution would be to replace the entire units with new computers.

Interpretive panel for beehive The observation honeybee hive is a very interesting exhibit that was added after the other permanent exhibits were installed. The beehive has no interpretive material to go with it. Visitors rely on direct inquiries in order to understand the exhibit. Nearby the beehive is a lightly used recycling exhibit with a two-sided rotating panel. The information on the recycling panel should be overlain with interpretive material on the honeybees. Two new honeybee panels have already been designed complete with artwork and text and await funding for production and installation.

Better road signs Visitors frequently come in the building and advise staff that they had no idea that the facility was there and would have come sooner had they known. The IC is outside the main flow of park visitor traffic and is unexpected by visitors in this primarily historic park. When the lower park is full of people on busy weekends, very often the IC will only get a trickle of visitors. Road signs are needed to advise visitors as well as those passing by the park of the facility. Signs are needed on both north and south-bound lanes of Route 29, on Route 546 approaching the main park entrance and in the vicinity of the lower park so that visitor traffic might be better directed to the facility.

More storage space Nature interpretation programs require significant amounts of materials such as collecting equipment, aquarium supplies, birdseed, craft supplies, puppets, costumes and other educational props, maps, posters, sampling equipment, maintenance supplies, etc. Storage space was an issue from the new facility's first scope of work meeting. The truth of the matter is, the IC building has not a single closet or storage area. Volumes of environmental education equipment line the walls of a staff work area and a staff rest room. In fact, much of this material would be in full view of the public upon their entering the building were it not for a creatively placed office cubicle panel which blocks that view. A small storage shed obtained a few years ago and located behind the IC building is helpful but, is also filled to the brim with equipment. The facility is badly in need of storage space.

Playground equipment More children visit the IC with their families, classes and scout groups than perhaps any facility in WCSP. A playground ought to be available for those children nearby the facility. A playground would attract more visitors to the facility and would provide an activity for groups which are waiting for an interpretive program to begin. Often, classes arrive in pairs so that the visiting school can fill out their bus. Limitations in staff at the IC require that the school provide something for one of the classes to do while the other is being serviced with a park-sponsored program. A playground would be most helpful for this purpose. Currently, the nearest playground is in Knox Grove. This is about a fifteen minute walk for young children.

The facility's name An interpretive/outdoor education facility has been located at the current IC site since the early 1960s. That facility was called the "Nature Center". In 1997, the Division office in Trenton required that the new facility be referred to as the "Interpretive Center" upon its opening. In subsequent years all buildings in NJ state parks and forests formerly called Nature Centers were renamed as Interpretive Centers by Division mandate. In 1997 walk-through attendance at the WCSP Interpretive Center (after the required name change) dropped from 7400 (1996) to about 6400 visitors. Program attendance remained fairly stable at about 3500 visitors. In 1998 when the old Nature Center road signs in the park were replaced with Interpretive Center signs, the facility's walk-through attendance declined by another 1000 visitors down to around 5400. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these statistics is that the term

“Interpretive Center” is not visitor friendly and doesn’t do much to explain to casual park visitors what to expect before venturing a trip out to the facility. Most visitors including children know what a nature center is. Visitor comments made informally to IC staff combined with the aforementioned visitation figures would suggest that the name interpretive center is not understood nearly so well. The term Nature/Interpretive Center helps somewhat in distinguishing this facility from other types of visitor centers however, the name is long, difficult to pronounce and is difficult to remember. Furthermore, the term “nature” is not indicated on any of the park road signs. The obvious recommendation is that the name of the facility revert to Nature Center.

Facility website An increasing number of visitors are being referred to the IC via information obtained from the internet. While the Division maintains a website with pages devoted to each state park and forest, individual sites do not have official web pages linked to the Division webpage. An IC webpage would be a helpful outreach and marketing tool where general information, events, newsletters, photos as well as naturalistic information could be posted.

Wayside exhibits The Nature/Interpretive Center has a self guiding trail with station markers and a brochure. There are however, no wayside exhibits on the grounds surrounding the facility. This represents a missed opportunity to reach visitors who do not enter the building or participate in programs. Wayside exhibits interpreting some of the local plants, wildlife and naturalistic phenomena would be an obvious benefit.

Handicapped trail The trails in WCSP have very rough surfaces due to the ubiquitous presence of rocks and tree roots. At present, no alternative exists for wheelchairs and strollers for young children. A plan is underway to convert the Five Senses Trail into a handicapped trail. The trail will have a hard packed surface and will be accessible near the pavilion.

Miscellaneous Items The IC has need for several different items in order to enhance operations and services. A two way radio would be useful for safety and security purposes. A radio would permit communications with staff members out around the park, and would allow monitoring conversations and incidents which are being tended to by other park personnel. A digital camera would enable photographs of groups and events to be placed in the newsletter and other brochures. A new computer printer with higher resolution than the current equipment would provide for higher quality graphics in the newsletter and other on site publications. Also, better desktop publishing software would also improve the quality of on site literature including the *Grapevine*. A desktop publishing program entitled *PageMaker* working in concert with other graphics programs such as *PhotoShop* and *Illustrator* would provide the capability of developing permanent exhibits on site. A laptop computer would be necessary to upgrade our slide projection operations by interfacing with the multimedia projector thus, enabling Power Point-type presentations.

Appendix 1

List of groups that have participated in Interpretive Center Programs in 2001

4H Homeschool	Haddonfield Friends
All Bright Country Day School	Helen Fort School
Awanas Group,Central Baptist	Homespun Homeschoolers
Backyard Rascals Day Camp	Hopewell Elementary Preschool
Bear Tavern School	Joseph Capella School
Bethany Church	Lakehurst Elementary School
Boys' Brigade	Lawrenceville Elementary School
Brownie Troop 1384	Learning Together Homeschoolers
Brownie Troop 1451	Looking Upward Academy
Brownie Troop 1825	Mercer County Headstart
Brownie Troop 639	Mom's Club of Ringoes
Cindy Harris' Homeschool	Nature Seekers 4H
College of NJ	Newtown Friends
Cook College Forestry & Wildlife Club	Nursery Center, United Church of Christ
Cornerstone Homeschool Network	Princeton Junior School
Cub Pack 29	Ring Nursery School
Cub Pack 3	SayenSchool
Cub Pack 52	Skillman Child Development Center
Cub Pack 15	Tudor Time
Cub Pack 1776	Washington Crossing Christian School
Cub Pack 189	We Care Day Camp
Cub Pack 1908	West Amwell Elementary School
Cub Pack 23	
Cub Pack 26	
Cub Pack 27	
Cub Pack 33	
Cub Pack 44	
Cub Pack 66	
Cub Pack 850	
Dutchneck School	
George School Summer Camp	
Girl Scout Troop 1775	
Girl Scout Troop 671	
Girl Scout Troop 992	
Greenbrook School	

Appendix 2

Washington Crossing State Park Interpretive Center List of Literature Developed on Site

Nature/Interpretive Center Trails
Nature's Grapevine (periodical)
Group Reservation Confirmation Form
Group Leader's Pretrip Information
Nature Center Pretrip Quiz
Post Trip Evaluation Form
Project Wild Pretrip Activities
Group Program Listing
Volunteer Questionnaire
Color Me Flower
Color Me Turtle
Color Me Bird
Color Me Salamander
Color Me Moth
Self Guiding Nature Trail Brochure
George Washington Memorial Arboretum
Brochure
Maple Sugaring at Washington Crossing State
Park
Maple Sugaring Fact Sheet
Nature Explorers Fact Sheet
Checklist of Trees and Shrubs of the Park
Checklist of Birds of the Park
Checklist of Reptiles and Amphibians of
Central New Jersey
Checklist of Wildflowers of the Park
Checklist of Thirteen Common Mammals
Teaching Children About the Environment
Magic of Monarchs
Raising Monarchs
Whitetail Deer
Owls
Volunteer Information Fact Sheet
Interpretive Center Brochure Guidelines for
Eagle Scout Projects
assorted handouts that accompany various
activities

Appendix 3

Inventory of Nonliving Collections

Beehive(observation)
Collection(21 lithic artifacts)
Collection(4 lithic artifacts)
Collection(american butterflies)
Collection(assorted fossils1)
Collection(assorted fossils2)
Collection(assorted rocks & minerals)
Collection(coleoptera)
Collection(giant silk moths)
Collection(hymenoptera)
Collection(insects of the park)
Collection(loose geologic specimens)
Collection(Minerals of NJ)
Collection(moths of the park)
Collection(NJ Rocks1)
Collection(NJ Rocks2)
Collection(What Mineral it?)
Collection(What Rock is it?)
Deer Hide(tanned)
Diorama(Crossing, 17th century)
Diorama(Crossing, 18th century)
Diorama(Crossing, 19th century)
Diorama(Crossing, 21st century)
Diorama(life on forest floor)
Flintlock Musket(18th century)
Mount Screech Owl(red morph)
Mount(3 tree trunks)
Mount(4 track casts)
Mount(4 tree trunks)
Mount(snake skeleton)
Mount, American Kestrel(2)
Mount, Bobwhite(2)
Mount, Great-horned Owl (standing)
Mount, Great-horned Owl (wall)
Mount, Muskrat
Mount, Red-shouldered hawk
Mount, Red-tailed Hawk (melanistic morph)
Mount, Red-tailed Hawk(light morph)
Mount, Ruffed Grouse
Mount, Saw-whet Owl
Mount, Screech Owl(gray morph)
Nest(bald-faced hornet)
Nest(crow)
Nest(woodpecker)
Photograph(early 19th century mule barge repro)
Photograph(early 20th century Nelson House repro)
Ringing Rock
Skull, (Deer)
Skull,(Assorted Wildlife)
Skull,(Beaver)
Skull,(Raccoon)
Skull,(Red Fox)
Turtle Shell(box)
Turtle Shell(snapping)