



Project Profile

Cathlapotle Plankhouse Project

Education and Interpretive Plan, Interpretive Program Scripts and Volunteer Training

Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Committee Vancouver/Clark County and Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Ridgefield, WA

Site: Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, located north of Vancouver, WA, is a 5,000-acre+ unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Established in 1965 to protect habitat for the Dusky Canada Goose, it now provides vital wintering habitat for a variety of birds, waterfowl and other wildlife on the Columbia River floodplain. In 1991, the ancient remains of the native village of Cathlapotle were located and excavated on the Refuge by a team of archaeologists. This village site was visited by the Lewis and Clark Expedition and documented in their journals.

Issue: The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial presented a unique opportunity to interpret the story of the Expedition along with the cultural stories of the native peoples who originally inhabited this area. The Cathlapotle Plankhouse Project was organized to raise private funds for the development and construction of a replica Chinookan-style Native American plankhouse on Refuge lands to focus interpretive and educational efforts on this story. Refuge resources, however, could not provide staff to guide visitors through the site to interpret this amazing story.

Solution: Volunteers were recruited and trained to guide tours, lead school groups and provide general information for the site.



Role: An Education and Interpretive Plan, reviewed by the agency with tribal interests and partners, was developed to guide the project and ensure partner support for interpretation of the site. Five different themed interpretive scripts were developed to cover the key stories of the site. A corps of dedicated volunteers was trained in basic interpretive skills and in use of the scripts.



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