

“A Rich Historical Heritage and Recreational Asset”
from a speech by Sherry R. Fisher, Chairman, Lewis and Clark Trail Commission
as reported in *The Des Moines Register* of September 6, 1966

The story of the Lewis and Clark Trail plan really has four beginnings. First, of course, was the Lewis and Clark expedition itself. This expedition was one of the most notable achievements in the history of our country. It was to a great extent the result of Thomas Jefferson's lifetime interest in the vast country of the Northwest. This interest was augmented by his scientific curiosity in the Indians, animals, plants, and geography of our then largely unknown country.

It must have also been true that Jefferson realized the immense future importance of this great land for the expansion of our then young country and thus assisted in its growth to a world power.

Waterway Myth Ended

The expedition has been called by many historians one of the most perfectly executed explorations of all times and one of the most important in the formation of our country as we know it today. The expedition consolidated our boundaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

It was a major accomplishment of the Lewis and Clark expedition that it laid to rest forever the myth of a navigable passage across the continent. It established, by actual observation, that the sources of the Missouri and the Columbia lie too far apart for any easy portage and that neither river is truly navigable in its upper reaches.

The expedition traversed a territory that has since become 11 of the great central and western states. Thus, it provided a basis for the United States claim to this great expanse of land from the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to the Pacific Northwest.

Darling's Vision

The second beginning of the Lewis and Clark Trail plan is in the life of the late J. N. (Ding) Darling. As most people well know, he was a world-famous cartoonist; he was in addition, a humanitarian, great American, and distinguished conservationist. He contributed many important things to the well being of our country, leaving a legacy of excellent concepts pertaining, among other things, to good conservation. They will challenge the thinking and action of our people for many years to come.

Perhaps foremost of these was his great concept of a wildlife and recreational trailway following the historic route of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Largely because of this dream within the mind and heart of Mr. Darling, we now have the Lewis and Clark Trail plan approaching a reality.

Enacted by Congress

The third beginning of this story is with the creation of the J. N. (Ding) Darling Foundation. Shortly after Mr. Darling's passing early in 1962, the Darling Foundation, a non-profit corporation, was created by a number of Mr. Darling's friends and associates. The goals and

objectives of the foundation are an extension of Mr. Darling's conservation concepts. Notable among the projects that the Foundation has supported is the Lewis and Clark Trail plan.

A concurrent congressional resolution to identify and mark the Lewis and Clark Trail was enacted by Congress in the fall of 1963, giving the Lewis and Clark Trail plan official governmental recognition.

Commission Established

The fourth beginning of this story is the congressionally created Lewis and Clark Trail Commission in the fall of 1964. The act had among its purposes not only the objectives of the joint congressional resolution, but additional goals of advancing public awareness of the far-reaching significance of the expedition, and further to encourage desirable long-term conservation and outdoor recreation objectives not only for the states along the expedition route, but the nation as well.

The commission's responsibilities relate only to the Lewis and Clark Expedition route, and it is to this area that it is directing its efforts. The Lewis and Clark Trail Commission, established as a temporary body with advisory and coordinating powers, cannot in itself undertake the tasks which are necessary to preserve, mark, and keep available for public enjoyment this historic route.

18 Proposals Listed

It can, however, offer advice to those agencies, organizations, and individuals responsible for the development, administration, protection, and preservation of the resources along the expedition route. Therefore, the commission has developed a list of 18 recommendations for federal, state, local, and private action:

Federal

1. The Department of Interior should undertake a study to assess the outdoor recreation potential of the Upper Missouri River from Yankton, SD to Fort Benton, MT, with a view toward the creation of a national recreation area.
2. Congress should establish a nationwide system of trails with particular emphasis on the development of a hiking trail along the route of the Lewis and Clark expedition.
3. Congress should establish a national system of wild rivers to include as initial units a portion of the Upper Missouri River, the Middle Fork Clearwater River, and the Salmon River in Idaho.
4. The Army Engineers should develop facilities at dams where navigation locks are lacking which would permit boats to be transported around the dams. The Engineers should assist state and local agencies to provide facilities for the use of boaters along the water route under their jurisdiction
5. The Engineers should proceed immediately with plans to acquire land and begin levee and water-control work to develop the oxbow lakes for recreational use in Iowa and Nebraska. Completion of this project should assist the states in solving their boundary dispute.
6. The U.S. Travel Service, Department of Commerce should give appropriate publicity to the Lewis and Clark Trail in its description of American travel resources to potential foreign visitors.

State

1. Highway departments should give serious consideration to the development of parkways and scenic roads particularly along those sections of the Lewis and Clark Trail highway which pass through outstanding scenic areas in close proximity to the Missouri and Columbia Rivers.
2. Highway departments should take action to designate a Lewis and Clark highway as soon as possible and begin up-grading of the road surface where needed.
3. Highway departments should mark the highways designated as the Lewis and Clark Trail highway with the approved Lewis and Clark Trail symbol as soon as possible.
4. Consideration should be given to the acquisition of scenic easements, protective buffers, or the establishment of zoning regulations along the Lewis and Clark Trail highways to ensure adequate protection of the scenic resources.
5. Travel or promotion departments should take the lead in developing interpretation and information centers along the trail.
6. Adequate state legislation should be enacted and enforced to control sewage and industrial waste disposal in the Missouri and Columbia River Basins.
7. The states of Iowa and Nebraska should make a sincere effort to solve their mutual boundary problem.
8. The state Lewis and Clark Trail committees should undertake the development of educational programs which would inform the public of the historic, wildlife, and other recreational resources available along the route of the expedition and could be carried out as part of the existing promotion efforts of state travel, tourism, recreation, park, or economic development departments and the proposed Lewis and Clark Trail Association.

Local

1. Cities, towns, and counties should make a greater effort to preserve and protect buildings and sites of historic significance along the Lewis and Clark Trail highway.
2. Cities and towns should make maximum use of the federal open-space program to permit the development of small parks and squares to include some of the original Lewis and Clark campsites.

Private

1. A Lewis and Clark Trail Association should be formed to further the promotion of the Lewis and Clark Trail program. Membership could include local business interests along the trail highways as well as state advertising, publicity, travel or tourist agencies, oil companies, and historical societies. The association should consider as part of its program the following:
 - (a) Promote public interest in and use of the Lewis and Clark Trail highway by advertising and publicizing the facilities available,
 - (b) Advise and assist the states in special projects or promotion of travel along the Lewis and Clark Trail highways,
 - (c) Recommend and implement such special projects to expand travel,

- (d) Assist industry and civic organizations to obtain advertising and promotional support,
 - (e) Encourage the communications media to provide editorial support for travel projects within the trail area, and
 - (f) Raise and collect funds by gift and contribution for support of the program.
3. The Lewis and Clark story should be told in each museum and gallery along the route. The state historical society should coordinate this effort to eliminate duplication and permit the traveler to learn the story of the expedition as it relates to that particular portion of the trail.

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