DESCRIPTION SUMMARY OF THE

LEWIS & CLARK CENTER IN NEBRASKA CITY

The Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Trail and Visitor Center provides unique educational experiences to approximately 10,000 visitors each year. There are opportunities for students to rediscover the wonders of flora and fauna of nature as they “walk in the footsteps” of Lewis & Clark along the 2.5 miles of trails through 79 acres of property.

Exterior exhibits include a 55 foot long keel boat, a Native American earth lodge, a Native American garden, a model log cabin and a river-overlook platform.

The hands-on exhibits inside the 12,000 square foot three-story building provide unique historic, scientific, cultural, recreational and educational experiences to visitors with a wide range of interests and backgrounds. Students learn about the 300 new plants and animals that Lewis & Clark discovered and documented using President Thomas Jefferson’s methods of observation and discovery.

We have welcomed visitors from all 50 states in the USA for each of the past 12 years, and from about 3 dozen foreign countries each year. The Center hosts dozens of field trips for students each year. The Center hosts a number of special educational events and live demonstrations throughout the year.

**Historic experiences**. This Center plays a vital role in describing the exploration of the frontier territory from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean by the Lewis & Clark’s Corps of Discovery in 1804-1806. Interpretive guides explain the influence, direction and vision of President Thomas Jefferson on the exploration and expansion of the western part of the United States. Visitors will experience a bit of what life was like 200 years ago.

**Scientific experiences**. The interpretive theme of the Center is focused on the flora, fauna and scientific discoveries recorded in the daily journals of Lewis & Clark in a way that is not being done in any other Lewis & Clark Center in the nation. Interactive exhibits feature all 178 new plants and 122 new animals discovered by Lewis and Clark, which were previously unknown to scientists in the United States, collected and described in the original journals of expedition members at the direction of President Thomas Jefferson. Interactive exhibits include specimen collection, map making, celestial reading and medicinal treatments. Nature and culture will be interpreted through the timeless methods of observation and discovery, allowing visitors to “rediscover” nature and apply historic scientific methods to today’s world.

**Cultural experiences**. Throughout the Center and in the full-sized Plains Indian Earth Lodge exhibit there is an emphasis on the vital role that the 50 different Native American Indian tribes played in the survival and successful return of the explorers. Many of the displays explain how the natives showed the explorers how to use native plants and animals for food and medicinal purposes. The significant and invaluable impact of Native American Indians interactions with the Corps of Discovery members is described in the exhibits and explained by interpretive guides.

**Recreational experiences**. Two and a half miles of interpretive hiking trails through trees, native grasses and wildflowers enable present-day explorers to literally walk in the footsteps of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark as they left their boats in this area in July 1804 to walk on shore to explore and collect scientific specimens. A number of species of wild animals and birds can be observed on the 79 acre property. Interactive indoor and outdoor exhibits, displays and programs are designed to allow people of all ages to explore, observe and rediscover nature. A trailhead to the 21 mile Steamboat Trace hiking and biking trail from Nebraska City to Brownville is located near the Center.

**Educational experiences**. A primary role of the Center is to provide current and future generations with information regarding the legacy of the Corps of Discovery’s journey into the unknown interior of the Louisiana Purchase and the impact the explorers’ discoveries continue to have on the growth and development of the nation. Quality educational opportunities are provided for local, national and international students and visitors regarding this historic adventure and how lessons learned then can be applied to today’s world. Educational exhibits, programs and curriculum will be continually developed to provide a superior, interactive, hands-on, scholarly-based experience for students, families and visitors of all ages.

**Informational experiences**. The staff of the Center welcomes visitors to the area and provides helpful information and directions on an as-needed basis to ensure a memorable experience and to encourage additional exploration of the region. An extensive display of brochures provide tourists with information about historic sites, events and services available locally in Nebraska City, regionally in the Missouri River corridor between Omaha and Kansas City, and nationally along the Lewis & Clark Trail.

**SUMMARY**

Our goals are to provide top quality visitor experiences which are inspiring, informational and memorable. We want the experiences to be unique. We are continually upgrading and adding exhibits and educational programs to attract return visitors.

We provide prudent stewardship of the property and this small portion of the historic Lewis & Clark Trail. We maintain a strong partnership with the National Park Service to enhance and support the preservation, development, and interpretation goals of the Center.