
Lewis & Clark Trail News

Bringing the Trail to Life

May 3, 2025



Richard Hunt
Executive Director
Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance

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On the Trail:

A week of Collaboration and Advocacy

Last week was a productive time on the road as I traveled to Omaha, Nebraska for a busy slate of Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance business and partnerships. We kicked off with a full day joint planning session with the leadership team of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail National Park Service team followed by our Spring Board of Directors Meeting. These collaborative sessions are a critical part of our shared mission to protect, promote, and enhance the Trail—and this one was especially productive.

From Omaha, I headed west to Montana where I was honored to speak at the Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism. I presented to more than 100 destination travel managers about the powerful role cultural heritage tourism can play in driving

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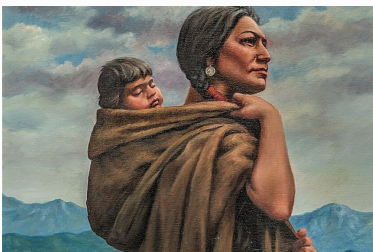
economic growth and building a deeper sense of place across Montana. The energy and interest in using the Lewis and Clark story as a foundation for local tourism initiatives was inspiring.

Following the conference, I spent two days at the LCTA National Headquarters in Great Falls, working alongside our dedicated staff, engaging with members of the Portage Route Chapter, and meeting with partners at the National Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. These in-person connections strengthen our collective work and help us respond to the evolving needs of the Trail and its communities.

In this edition of the newsletter, you'll find more details from these visits as well as updates from our Board of Directors. It's an important time for the interpretive community. Many partners are facing serious challenges due to declining funding—impacting staff levels, public programming, operating hours, and in some cases, leading to the closure of visitor centers and historic sites.

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance stands firmly with our interpretive partners. We are actively providing letters of support and public advocacy—and we encourage you to do the same. Please consider reaching out to your U.S. Senators and Representatives to voice your support for heritage sites and the vital role they play in education, tourism, and preserving our shared national story.

Thanks to Gary Kimsey for his contributions to the Trail News



Watch
[Goodbye to Sakakawea](#)



Watch
[Down the Ohio River](#)



Watch
[Most Certain Evidence](#)

In this moving presentation from the archival Tent of Many Voices, scholar and Mandan-Hidatsa storyteller Amy Mossett tells of the parting of Lewis and Clark as they say goodbye to Sakakawea, Charbonneau, and baby Pomp, not knowing if they would ever meet again.

Through cultural insight and historical research, Mossett offers a powerful reflection of August 17, 1806.

Before the Corps of Discovery could begin their epic journey, Meriwether Lewis needed the right vessel—one strong enough to go up the Missouri River against the current. In this video, discover the story of the iconic barge: a fifty-five-foot riverboat built (eventually) to carry the expedition's cargo and crew into the unknown West.

Follow the challenges Lewis faced at Fort Fayette in 1803, including a half-finished boat, a drunken builder, and falling water levels that threatened the entire plan. Hear how Lewis used the delay to recruit men, plan logistics, and await word from William Clark. It's a story of perseverance, preparation, and one very late boat launch.

Thomas Jefferson believed science and politics were deeply intertwined—and that understanding the origins of Native American languages could illuminate both the history of the continent and the future of American democracy. This video explores Jefferson's early efforts to collect Indigenous vocabularies, his theories on migration and governance, and how linguistic evidence was tied to his vision of a new political order.

Featuring rare documents, including a mud-stained vocabulary list nearly lost to theft, this story reveals how Jefferson's curiosity and political philosophy shaped one another—and how a single project connected anthropology, nation-building, and early American identity.



The spirit of collaboration was greatly on display during an April 25 meeting of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's board of directors with staff members who oversee the National Park

"The story of Lewis and Clark is about one of the most significant episodes in our country's history, but the story is also about people working together in today's America with the goals of preserving the trail and educating the public," said Richard Hunt, LCTA's chief executive officer, "and the collaboration needed to accomplish those goals was significantly evident as we met with the NPS staff."

The daylong meeting occurred at the NPS Lewis and Clark Headquarters and Visitor Center in Omaha, Neb. The meeting took place during the LCTA board's annual 3-day in-person gathering. Board members pay their own way to attend these in-person meetings. Other board meetings during the year are held remotely via Zoom.

As with most federal departments today, the NPS Lewis and Clark agency faces new challenges that include funding decreases and staffing declines. Mark Weekley, superintendent of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, said he is optimistic, however, about his agency's ability to persevere and proceed on with its myriad of programs that benefit the trail and public. NPS staff members gave presentations about their programs: protecting the Trail's resources, engaging with Native America tribes along the Trail, communicating with the public, collaborating with partners, and, in a new program, moving forward with "Big Medicine: The York Project," which is designed to promote and honor York's legacy.

In emphasizing the importance of collaboration, Hunt, in his presentation, provided the example of the success of a project that NPS developed and then handed off to LCTA: the [Lewis and Clark Trail Experience](#) travel website. With its extensive events listings, trip inspiration articles and other information, the website has become the premier resource tool for people planning trips along the Trail and discovering more about the Lewis and Clark Expedition. "This could never have happened without our working together," Hunt said.



Join via
Zoom

May 18, 2025
3 PM MDT

How many Calories?

What were the energy demands to pole a barge up the Missouri River?

Join us for a free [on-line lecture](#) presented by Andrew Creer who will use current data to hypothesize energy requirements of the Corps of Discovery and provide comparisons to modern data highlighting the limits of sustained physical activity.

Andrew Creer is a professor specializing in exercise science and is currently serving as the department chair for Exercise Science & Outdoor Recreation at Utah Valley University.

The Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance's 2025 Stewardship Endowment Grants help 15 organizations focus on speakers, events, displays, brochures, and other creative projects that tell the expedition's story. Here is a look at two of the grants:



Land Bridge Welcome Gate

A \$10,000 grant to The Confluence Project will help refinish the Welcome Gate on the Vancouver Land Bridge in Vancouver, Wa. The gate is the entrance to a beautiful 40-foot-wide pedestrian bridge that connects historic Fort Vancouver to near where the Lewis and Clark Expedition camped while journeying on the Columbia River.

Opening in 2008, the popular quarter-of-a-mile-long Land Bridge arcs over State Route 14, one of the busiest highways in the Pacific Northwest, and is considered to be a symbolic link back to Lewis and Clark and the development of the Northwest, as well as the physical end of the historic Klickitat Trail.

The Welcome Gate's design represents the way Indigenous peoples along the Columbia welcomed someone arriving by canoe. Two cedar canoe paddles, each adorned with a cast-glass sculpture of a Lower Columbia River Indigenous woman's face, evoke the site's role as a historic tribal crossroads and a point of contact between Native Peoples, Americans and Europeans.

The Welcome Gate is a favorite focal point for interpretive talks for dozens of public events and field trips.

[Watch: Tour of Land Bridge](#)



Educational Panels at Fort Osage

The Fort Osage National Historic Landmark in Sibley, Mo., 32 miles east of Kansas City, Mo., received a \$2,054 grant to help research historical information and create six educational panels that can be used as a visually appealing overview showing visitors a direct involvement of Fort Osage with the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

The goal is to offer visitors basic knowledge that will help them ask more in-depth questions of guides and interpreters at the fort. The plan is for panels to also be used as traveling exhibits for museums, National Park Service sites, and other places in the region. This will benefit Fort Osage and the Lewis and Clark trail by raising awareness among people that this important history exists so close to their homes.

Fort Osage has an interesting connection to William Clark. In 1808, under Clark's direction, a military group from St. Charles, Mo., journeyed to the site, a high bluff which afforded a good view of the Missouri River. They built the fort to house soldiers for guarding the new U.S. Louisiana Purchase territory and establish trading relationships with Native Peoples.

[Watch: Tour of Fort Osage](#)



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Bringing the Trail to Life

April 5, 2025

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Help us expand the community by sharing the newsletter with your network. Simply provide this sign-up link to friends, family, and fellow Trail enthusiasts.

When you're in Kansas City you'll have the fun opportunity to walk in the proverbial footsteps of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark while visiting a delightful treasure of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

During a day of visits to Lewis and Clark-related places, a bus tour will take you to Lewis & Clark Point, a dramatic bluff overlooking the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas rivers. It was here, during the "disagreeably worm" [sic] Sept. 15, 1806, that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark climbed a steep hill to the bluff and subsequently noted in their journals how the site offered a "commanding situation for a fort."

A fort was never built, but today the bluff is part of a beautiful park featuring Lewis and Clark historical signage and one of the most significant works of art along the Trail. At 21 feet tall and 18 feet wide, the bronze and granite statue commands a bold, heroic presence. It is one of very few statues that features the expedition's six most popular characters in today's world: Lewis, Clark, York, Sacagawea and her baby Jean Baptiste, and Seaman the dog.



*Corps of Discovery
Eugene Daub*

Join us in Kansas City

And, by the way, you'll be there on the same day of the month—September 15—that Lewis and Clark stood atop the bluff 219 years ago.

Hopefully, the weather will not be “disagreeably worm.”

[2025 LCTA Annual Gathering](#)

September 14 - 17, 2025

[Register](#)

[Trip Inspirations](#)

Curated by members of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance, these Trip Inspirations go beyond the well-known landmarks to reveal hidden gems along the Trail. Each journey includes links to rich historical backstories, nearby attractions, and an interactive map with driving directions. Customize your route by reversing directions, adding or removing stops, or even creating your own itinerary.

Pierre to Bismarck

The Land of Sitting Bull



Travel up the Missouri River, retracing the path of the Corps of Discovery from Pierre on U.S. Highway 83, paralleling the path of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as you travel toward Mobridge. Reflect on the Missouri River's role in...

Stops: 6

Distance: 230 miles

[VIEW INSPIRATION](#)

Oregon Coast Loop

Sacagawea's Day at the Beach



After a month at their Fort Clatsop winter quarters, Sacagawea had still not seen the Pacific Ocean. This would soon change: “Capt Clark set out after an early breakfast with the party in two canoes as had been concerted the...

Stops: 7

Distance: 70 miles

[VIEW INSPIRATION](#)



Join us for the 37th annual Lewis & Clark Festival, held at the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls, MT! This year's featured performer is "Supaman"!

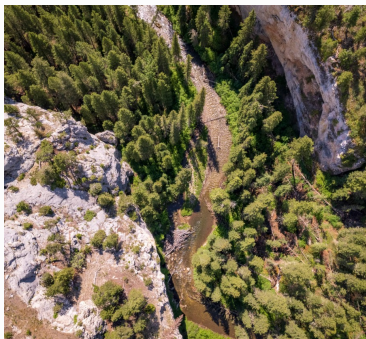
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June 20 & 21, 2025
Great Falls, Montana

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Upcoming Featured Events on the [LCTE Events Calendar](#)



[Judith River Restoration](#)

Join Wild Montana's Island Range Chapter at 6:00 PM on May 8 at Darkhorse Hall in Great Falls, MT to celebrate the restoration of the Middle Fork Judith River.

Chris Edgington from Montana Trout Unlimited will show slides and a short video about the cooperative effort to relocate a section of jeep road away from the river bottom, restore the natural channel and recover wild trout populations in the Middle Fork Judith Wilderness Study Area.



[Camp Dubois Departure](#)

Mark the departure of Lewis & Clark as they set out on an expedition of discovery!

Demonstrations will include artillery, muskets, candle making, fiber arts, cooking, and more. Volunteers will exhibit the replica of the White Pirogue the Expedition journeyed in.

The Departure Event runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday (May 10) and Sunday (May 11) at the Lewis and Clark State Historic Site, Hartford,



[Miller's Landing Day](#)

Sarting at noon May 10 is a free community event celebrating the founding of New Haven, Missouri, as "*Miller's Landing*" in 1836.

Crafts, art sellers and other exhibitors will populate Historic Downtown New Haven along with local food and beverage providers.

Lewis and Clark Reenactors (including John Colter) will be here to commemorate the Expedition's passing by this site in 1804 and 1806.



One River Away: Idaho, Memory, and the Stories of the Snake

Guest Essay by Laurie Rudd

Growing up in southeastern Idaho, I always understood the value of a river. It wasn't something I had to learn—it was something I lived. Just behind my house, a short walk through the pasture led to the river bottoms, where the South Fork of the Teton River flowed gently on its journey toward something larger. That modest stream joined the Henrys Fork, which in turn fed into the Snake River—a waterway that quietly weaves itself into the identity of the entire state.

From that quiet water hole in my backyard, I could imagine the current carrying me west. The Snake slithers its way across southern Idaho, winding through potato fields, plunging over the Shoshone Falls, and welcoming the Boise River into its flow. It grazes the edge of Oregon, teasing the state line as if uncertain which direction to take, before recommitting itself to Idaho and continuing its path. Along the way, the Snake touches some of the most breathtaking places I've known: Hells Canyon, the deepest gorge in North America, and later, the rugged beauty of the Salmon River.

The Salmon is my favorite. It crisscrosses Idaho like the Snake does, but it chooses the wild route—cutting through mountains and deep forests rather than farmland. It joins the Snake late in its journey, not far from where the Clearwater River also finds its way into the greater current. These rivers—Salmon, Clearwater, Henrys Fork—each play their own part, but they all eventually meet the Snake. They form a system that connects places and people across centuries. They carry stories.

Idaho's history is impossible to separate from its rivers. The water is the thread running through every narrative. Names, faces, and events change—but the river remains, a constant witness. On the eastern side of the state, where I first called home, the signs of history are visible everywhere: markers for the Lewis and Clark Trail and the Nez Perce Trail remind us that this land was crossed, explored, fought for, and lived in long before any of us arrived.

Two decades later, I now live on the opposite end of the state, near the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers. And still, I see those familiar markers—Lewis and Clark Trail, Nez Perce Trail. It's a full-circle moment. Lewis and Clark passed through the Salmon region, near my childhood home, before reaching this confluence. The Nez Perce people fled from this same area back toward Yellowstone, past Henrys Lake, near where my rivers begin. Even across such distance, the rivers tie the land—and the history—together. The current links me to William Clark, who deemed the Salmon too dangerous to navigate. That same river connects me to him, just as it connects me to home.

Now I swim in the Snake on this side of the state. I've traveled up its current by jet boat, visited the mouth of the Salmon, and stood where so many stories intersect. To truly love Idaho, I believe, is to understand these rivers—not just as physical features, but as carriers of memory and meaning. The rivers tell the stories of Lewis and Clark, of the Shoshone on the Salmon, of the Nimípuu (Nez Perce) along the Clearwater, and of the Nez Perce War that scattered people

across this landscape.

These rivers have seen it all. They still do.

In Idaho, you're never far from where something extraordinary happened. You're never more than one river away from another story—one current away from the past.

Laurie was born and raised in Idaho. 4th grade Idaho history started her journey to receive her bachelor degree in History from Brigham Young University. Following her degree she taught Junior High Humanities while continuing to research and study. Laurie and her family recently moved to the Lewis-Clark Valley where she is now raising her three kids! She is a member of the Lewis & Clark Trail Alliance.



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