

Encampment of Lewis & Clark enactors at Chittenden Locks in Ballard May 28-29



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SEATTLE--Visitors to the Chittenden Locks in Ballard May 28 and 29 can walk through a re-creation of a Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery encampment, including a group in authentic 1803 costume engaging in the explorers' typical daily activities.

The general public is welcome to attend from 2:30-6 p.m. Wednesday and 2-5 p.m. Thursday. The Locks is also hosting 30 morning school tours, which were arranged by appointments through the visitors center.

Those visiting the encampment will come upon a tent filled with tools and supplies from the expedition, and walk into a campsite with campfire and re-creators conducting the daily business of the Corps. Members of the enactors group will explain the items and activities and answer questions.

In this the first year of the bicentennial of the expedition, the Locks encampment offers local residents a chance to see for themselves what life was really like for these Northwest explorers.

In the Lewis and Clark Expedition, two Army officers, 26 enlisted men and five nonmilitary members made up the permanent party, known as the Corps of Discovery, that covered 7,689 miles of waterways by canoes and boats in two years, four months and 10 days.

"The Lewis and Clark Expedition is extremely significant," said Ken Wilk, assistant national coordinator, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, Corps of Engineers.

On Jan. 18, 1803, months before the Louisiana Purchase, President Thomas Jefferson sent a confidential letter to Congress, requesting money for an expedition to the Pacific Ocean.

"They were a lot like Special Forces," Wilk said. "They were an elite unit ready to fight if they had to, but also ready to act as diplomats."

The team came in contact with 55 new Indian tribes, recording their languages, trail routes and interpersonal relationships, all the while trying to make peace with the nations along the route. The expedition departed Camp River Dubois, near St. Louis, on May 14, 1804, and returned to St. Louis Sept. 23, 1806.

The team came back with significant scientific accomplishments including 178 new plant species and 122 unknown animal life species catalogued, new geological and meteorological records, and new topographical records of the area between the Missouri River and the Pacific Coast.

2003 through 2006 has been designated the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial through presidential proclamation. President Bush directed federal agencies, states, tribes, communities and the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial to promote educational opportunities regarding the Lewis

and Clark story.

The Corps of Engineers, manager of 90 percent of the waterway trail Lewis and Clark followed, has been supporting activities for two years and will continue through the commemoration.