

America's Heritage

Rediscovering The Rivers Of Lewis And Clark

(NAPSA)—Pop quiz: What's the longest river in America? If you said the Mississippi River, you're one of almost 80 percent of Americans who guessed wrong in a recent survey conducted for the National Geographic Society.

In fact, the Missouri River is the nation's longest river—but Meriwether Lewis and William Clark didn't know that either when they started traveling upriver from St. Louis in 1802 in their great river trip across the uncharted American west.

The "Voyage of Discovery," as their expedition was called, was an effort to discover a route to the Pacific Ocean through the territory acquired for the young nation by Thomas Jefferson in the Louisiana Purchase. By the time Lewis and Clark returned, they had discovered more than 30 new wildlife species, encountered both friendly and hostile tribes, and documented a majestic landscape teeming with birds, fish and tremendous herds of buffalo and antelope.

Now as the bicentennial of this historic adventure approaches in 2002, you can relive the journey at a traveling museum exhibit cosponsored by American Rivers, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and The History Channel. "Discovering the Rivers of Lewis and Clark" will visit 25 cities along the route the two explorers took, spreading a message of river conservation and encouraging people to get involved in key decisions affecting the future of the rivers the famous explorers traveled.

Visitors to the exhibit walk the length of the Lewis & Clark Trail, from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean, learning as they go about the rich river life that the explorers encountered. They also learn how the "Big Muddy"—the Missouri—along with the Snake, and Columbia rivers, have since been harnessed for human uses by channeling their waters between huge dams, threatening many of the species with extinction.

"We tell people it's still not too late to restore at least portions of



A new exhibit marks the bicentennial of Lewis & Clark's historic journey—and what can be done to restore the rivers they traveled on.

the rivers that Lewis and Clark traveled to a condition they would recognize," says Rebecca R. Wodder, president of American Rivers. "It's inspiring how communities up and down the Trail are rediscovering and redeveloping their riverfronts. And by doing it in an environmentally sound way, they're finding it's better for fish and wildlife and for their local economy."

The exhibit includes spectacular color photos and maps, audio stations playing voices of the past and present, a replica of Lewis and Clark's keelboat, and computer stations running interactive programs. A mini-theatre runs short videos about the rivers of Lewis and Clark by The History Channel and others. Those who are unable to visit the exhibit in person can retrace the route virtually at the American Rivers website, where a teacher's guide is available for use in classrooms all across the country.

"Discovering the Rivers of Lewis and Clark" will be on the road through 2003. To find out when it is coming to a location near you, and for the Lewis and Clark teacher's guide, point your browser to www.americanrivers.org/feature/exhibit.htm. To learn more about how you can help with American Rivers' efforts to restore the rivers traveled by Lewis and Clark as a tribute to the men of the Voyage of Discovery, see www.americanrivers.org/lewisclark/default.htm.