Lewis and Clark: A Legacy of Science

The Legacy

Early in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson signed into law the Louisiana Purchase, an act that doubled the size of the country and opened up a new frontier of untapped opportunity. In response to this unprecedented expansion of the nation, the nation's second president, James Madison, called for an expedition to explore the new territory. The explorers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, set out on their journey in 1804 and returned to St. Louis in 1806, having traveled nearly 8,000 miles and explored regions that were previously uncharted.

Mapping the Land

The Lewis and Clark Expedition left behind a legacy of scientific exploration that continues to this day. Their journey helped to map the American West and provided valuable information about the geography, climate, and ecosystems of the region. A detailed map of their journey was created, which is still used today as a valuable resource for understanding the West.

Continuing the Legacy

In the decades following the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the USGS was established to continue the tradition of scientific exploration and mapping. Today, the USGS is one of the leading providers of geospatial and environmental information, helping to support scientific research, natural resource management, and public safety.

Working with Native Americans

The USGS has a long history of working with Native American tribes to understand and protect natural resources. Throughout the years, the agency has provided technical assistance to tribes in managing natural resources, conducting research, and developing sustainable practices.

The Legacy of Lewis and Clark continues to inspire the USGS in its ongoing mission to serve the nation.

The USGS Map of Today

Today, the USGS Map of the Western United States provides a comprehensive view of the region, including topography, water resources, and vegetation. The map is used by scientists, researchers, and resource managers to understand the natural resources of the West and to develop strategies for their sustainable use.

USGS Mission

The USGS mission is to provide science in service of a changing world. The agency is committed to advancing scientific knowledge and understanding of the natural world, and to using that knowledge to inform public policy and decision-making.

President George W. Bush

President George W. Bush signed into law the 2008 Farm Bill, which includes provisions to protect the natural resources of the West. The bill provides funding for the USGS to continue its work in protecting and managing natural resources.

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