

# Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park General Management Plan

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## *Dear Park Neighbors, Visitors, and Other Interested Parties,*

The National Park Service (NPS) is working on the first long-range management plan for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. This new General Management Plan (GMP) will articulate the future vision for the park. It will provide the framework that will guide management decisions so that the vision can be accomplished. It will inform us as to how the park's resources are to be managed and how visitors are to experience the park.

NPS is leading the GMP planning effort. Our partners, the park's friends and neighbors, park visitors, and other interested parties are helping us prepare the plan. We are also working closely with the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove Park Advisory Commission. The Commission was legislatively established when the park was created and one of its primary responsibilities is to advise the NPS in the preparation and implementation of the GMP.

Public participation is essential when preparing a GMP. Over the past 18 months the NPS has completed the scoping process for the plan engaging the park's partners, stakeholders, local community leaders, and many others. In June 2006 we conducted a series of community meetings to inform the public regarding the GMP and to obtain your comments about the management issues facing the park.

Since last summer the GMP Planning Team has developed four conceptual alternatives for future

management of the park. These alternatives are based on the park's purpose and significance, the issues facing the park, the park's legal mandates, and the comments the public provided during the scoping period.

The purpose of this newsletter is to present the four management alternatives for your consideration and to ask you to provide your comments. You can do so in writing by completing the enclosed mail-back sheet. Or you can comment on-line via the internet or in writing directly to the park. Directions for on-line commenting are found on page four of this newsletter. Your comments will be taken into consideration during further refinement of the alternatives and ultimately in the selection of the preferred alternative.

Look for distribution of the Draft General Management Plan in fall 2007. Shortly after the Draft is distributed NPS will host another round of public meetings in Middletown, Strasburg, and Front Royal where we will present the alternatives and offer you further opportunities to comment.

Thank you for your participation in planning for the future of Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park.

Sincerely,

Diann Jacox, Superintendent  
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove  
National Historical Park

## Background and Park Purpose

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park (HNP) was established by Congress in 2002.

The park purposes are to:

- help preserve, protect, and interpret a nationally significant Civil War landscape and antebellum plantation
- tell the rich story of Shenandoah Valley history from early settlement through the Civil War
- preserve the significant historic, natural, cultural, military, and scenic resources found in the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove Plantation areas through partnerships with local landowners and the community
- serve as a focal point to recognize and interpret important events and locations within the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District

The NPS is authorized to acquire property within the park's authorized boundary from landowners who are willing to sell their land only. There is no authority to condemn private property. Currently the NPS owns 7.5 acres within the park. The park's Key Partners own approximately 1,171 acres and hold conservation easements on an additional 32 acres.

## The Park's Partners

The NPS is managing the park and cooperating with its partners in order to prepare the GMP. The Key Partners identified in the park's establishing legislation include:

- Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Belle Grove Incorporated
- Shenandoah County
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation

The NPS's other partners include its Community Partners – the Towns of Strasburg and Middletown, Virginia, as well as Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren Counties, Virginia.

## What is a General Management Plan?

A general management plan (GMP) identifies the overall direction for the future management of units of the national park system. GMPs take a long-range, broad, conceptual view, answering the question, "What kind of place do we want this park to be?" They provide a framework for managers to use in making decisions about such issues as how best to protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the park. All concepts, strategies, and actions in a GMP must be consistent with the reasons for the park's establishment – its purpose and significance. Federal legislation, such as the National Park Service Organic Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and NPS policies also direct what the plan can and cannot consider. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and NPS policy, GMPs are typically combined with an environmental impact statement. As such they identify significant issues and concerns, present a reasonable range of management alternatives, analyze the consequences of each of the alternatives, and select the preferred alternative from among those considered.

# What are the Management Alternatives under Consideration?

The NPS is exploring four alternatives for the future management of the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. Each alternative is based on a different concept that describes how the park’s resources would be managed and the experiences that visitors would have in the park.

Alternative A

– Continuation of Current Management (Status Quo)

Alternative B

(Option B1)  
(Option B2)

Alternative C

Alternative D

Alternative A – Continuation of Current Management (Status Quo)

In Alternative A current management practices would generally continue as they are today with few changes. Visitors would experience the park primarily at sites owned and managed by the Key Partners who would independently continue to assume responsibilities for interpretation and visitor services, and would maintain visitor contact facilities on their properties. NPS would serve primarily in a technical assistance capacity.

Concept Highlights:

- The Key Partners would continue to have primary responsibility for land acquisition, resource protection, and interpretation
- Park visitors would spend most of their time at sites managed by the Key Partners (Belle Grove Plantation, Cedar Creek Battlefield, Harmony Hall, and Keister Park)
- Park access would be via existing auto touring routes and directional signage; hiking/biking trails would be located on lands owned by the Key Partners
- The NPS and the Key Partners would continue to have an informal, collaborative relationship to share information, discuss issues of mutual concern, and coordinate responses to resource threats
- The NPS would acquire land and interest in land through donation and Congressional appropriation



**Belle Grove Plantation**  
(owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Managed by Belle Grove, Inc.)



**Heater House**  
(owned and managed by the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation)



**Keister Park** (foreground)  
(owned and managed by Shenandoah County)



**Harmony Hall**  
(owned and managed by Belle Grove, Inc.)



## Elements Common to the Three Action Alternatives

A number of actions are common to the three GMP action alternatives. These elements provide the foundation for the action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D).

### Major Common Actions:

- The park would be a focal point for important historical events and geographic locations within the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District and its Signal Knob Cluster; interpretive media on the National Historic District would be accessible in the park
- The NPS and the Key Partners would collaborate in providing multiple opportunities for visitors to experience all of the park's interpretive themes and stories
- The existing visitor facilities at the Cedar Creek Battlefield and Belle Grove Plantation would remain open to the public, Harmony Hall would become available for public tours, and new visitor facilities would be developed at the Keister Tract in accordance with Shenandoah County's master plan for the site
- The NPS and the Key Partners would respond to all opportunities to protect the park's resources and values and would acquire land and interests in land as opportunities arise (the focus and extent of this acquisition would vary as described below for three action alternatives)
- The NPS and the Key Partners would provide auto touring and hiking/biking pedestrian trail routes for visitors
- The NPS and the Key Partners would continue to foster a collaborative relationship to further the purposes of the park, with the NPS serving in a coordination and facilitation capacity for land and resource protection, and other shared goals
- The NPS and the Key Partners would develop written, shared strategies for implementing the General Management Plan and policies for operating the park
- The NPS and the Key Partners would provide technical assistance to one another, to private landowners, and to nearby communities in support of goals that further the purposes of the park



Land on Bowmans Mill Road owned and managed by the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (foreground)



Witham Tract (building complex on 7.5 acres on Bowmans Mill Road owned by the National Park Service)

## Alternative B

In Alternative B the Key Partners and possibly others would assume major responsibilities for land and resource protection within the park's legislative boundaries. The NPS and the Key Partners would maintain an informal collaborative relationship primarily for coordination and interpretive activities. Alternative B has two options: Option B1 relies on existing facilities for visitor contact; Option B2 assumes that the NPS would develop and manage a park visitor center.

### Concept Highlights

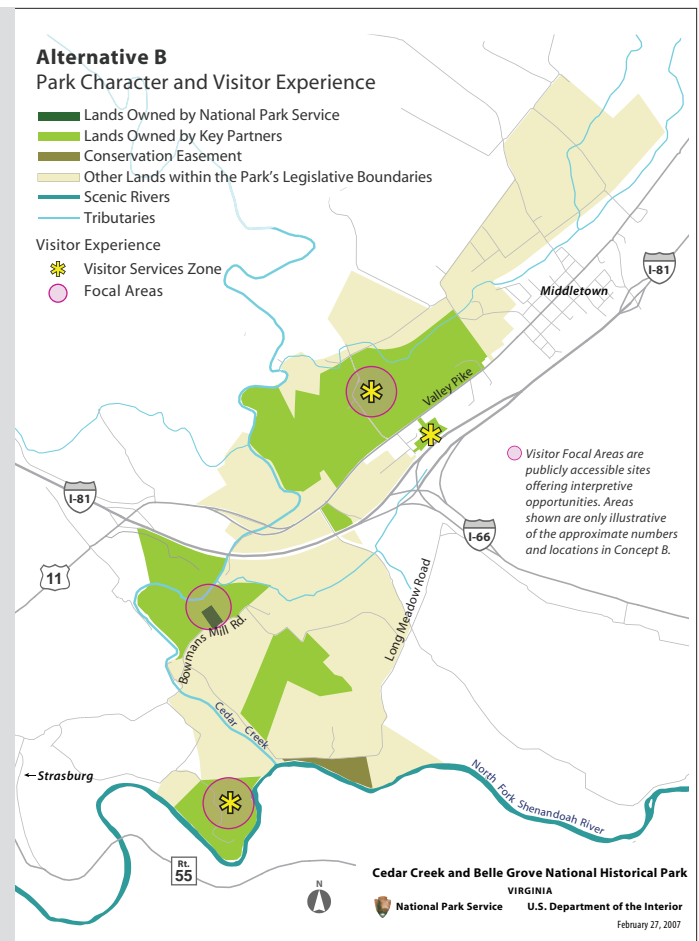
- Park access would be via auto touring routes and hiking/biking trails located within rights-of-way of selected existing roads; these routes and trails would be developed by the NPS and the Key Partners
- The NPS and the Key Partners would develop cooperative agreements to manage various aspects of the park
- The Key Partners would continue to have primary responsibility for land acquisition and resource protection
- The NPS would acquire land and interests in land by donation or from willing sellers as funds are available

### Additional Actions Associated with B1 (dispersed contact facilities):

- The NPS would provide information to visitors through a system of electronic media, which could include a web-based orientation, AM radio broadcasts, cell phone tours, CD rentals, MP3/iPod downloads, etc.
- The NPS interpretive staff would focus on ranger-led tours of the park rather than on staffing a visitor center
- Visitors would experience the park at Key Partner-owned sites
- Visitor contact facilities would be provided primarily by the Key Partners at Belle Grove, the Cedar Creek Battlefield, Harmony Hall, and the Keister Park

### Additional Actions Associated with B2 (visitor center):

- The NPS would develop and manage a visitor center but have no significant role in other types of park operations or visitor services
- The NPS would provide interpretation at the visitor center and orient the public to the park and to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District
- Visitors would experience the park at Key Partner-owned sites and the NPS-managed visitor center



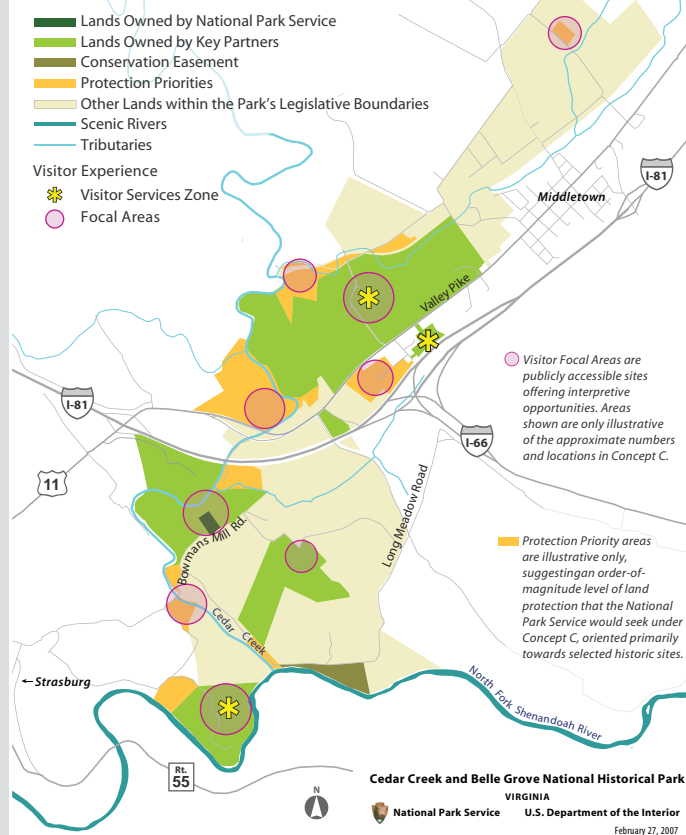
## Alternative C

In Alternative C visitor opportunities would occur at the visitor center and at other properties within the park. The NPS, the Key Partners, and possibly others would cooperatively seek to acquire these properties from willing sellers. Interpretive programs would be coordinated by the NPS and the Key Partners. Trails would enhance circulation. Formal agreements would be established for resource management and interpretation. The NPS would become a landowner within the park with a park operations presence.

### Concept Highlights:

- Visitors would experience the park at a visitor center as well as at an expanded network of sites owned by NPS and the Key Partners
- NPS would manage the visitor center where it would provide interpretation and orient the public to the park and to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District; the visitor center site would also provide the base for traditional park operations
- Park access would be via auto touring routes and hiking/biking trails located within rights-of-way of selected existing roads as well as within new rights-of-way acquired from willing sellers, including a trail that follows the course of the battle
- NPS, the Key Partners, and others would develop and implement a coordinated interpretive plan
- NPS and Key Partners would develop cooperative agreements to manage various aspects of the park
- NPS would acquire land and interests in land in a phased approach based on land protection priorities; the highest priority would be to acquire key historic sites that would become venues for visitor interpretation; the Key Partners would also acquire important lands as opportunities arise
- NPS and Key Partners would provide technical assistance to one another, to private landowners, and to nearby communities in support of viewshed and resource protection within the park
- NPS and Key Partners would develop proactive strategies to protect related resources outside the park (conservation easements, consultation with local governments, etc.)

## Alternative C Park Character and Visitor Experience



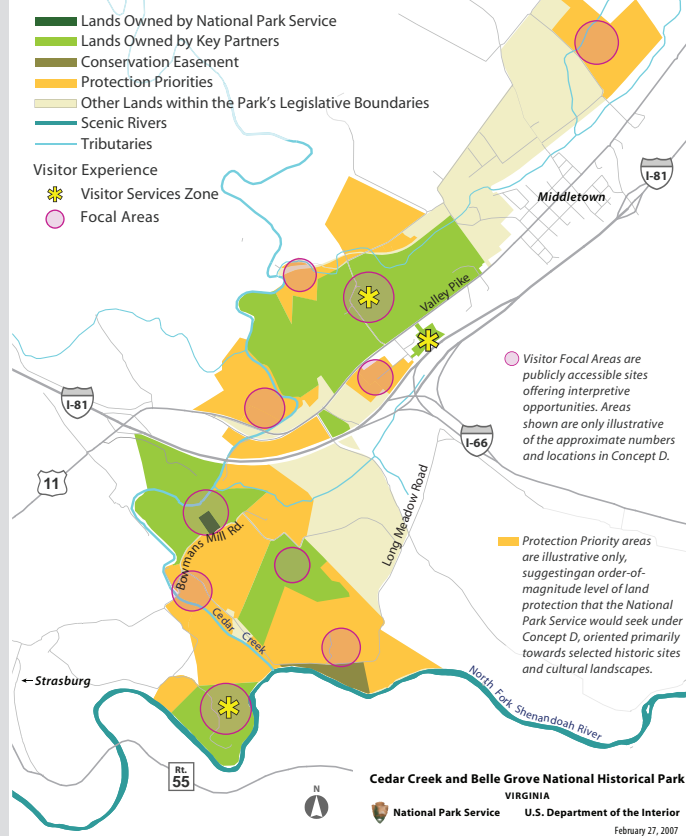
## Alternative D

In Alternative D visitors would experience a broad range of interpretive, recreation, and heritage experiences. These experiences would occur in protected landscape settings throughout the park. The NPS, the Key Partners, and possibly others would cooperatively seek to acquire from willing sellers the properties composing these landscapes. Interpretive programs would be coordinated by the NPS and the Key Partners. Trails would enhance circulation and provide connections to adjoining communities and attractions. The NPS would become a major landowner in the park with a traditional park operations presence.

### Concept Highlights:

- The NPS would develop and manage a visitor center where it would provide interpretation, orient the public to the park and to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District, and support educational, research, and other activities; the visitor center site would also provide the base for traditional park operations
- Park access would be via auto touring routes and hiking/biking trails located within rights-of-way of selected existing roads as well as within new rights-of-way acquired from willing sellers, including a trail that follows the course of the battle; trail connections would also be provided to regional trails outside the park
- The NPS, the Key Partners, and others would develop and implement a coordinated interpretive plan and programs throughout the park; the NPS would have an interpretive presence at some sites in the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District
- The NPS and the Key Partners would develop cooperative agreements to manage various aspects of the park, including a formal agreement defining a division of labor for park operations
- The NPS would acquire land and interests in land in a phased approach based on land protection priorities; the highest priorities would be lands composing landscapes and/or providing connections between lands owned by the NPS and the Key Partners; the Key Partners would also acquire important lands as opportunities arise
- The NPS and the Key Partners would provide technical assistance to one another, to private landowners, and to nearby communities in support of viewshed and resource protection within the park
- The NPS and the Key Partners would develop proactive strategies to protect related resources outside the park (conservation easements, consultation with local governments, etc.)

## Alternative D Park Character and Visitor Experience



### Large Events Zone

Areas designated for Civil War reenactments and other events that require actions to accommodate large numbers of visitors and accompanying actions to ensure that such events do not adversely impact the park's resources. This zone is an overlay in a designated area within the park's cultural landscape zone. It fulfills one of the park's special mandates to allow battle reenactments. The zone allows for other large events such as those held at Belle Grove Plantation.

### Cultural Landscape Zone

Areas representative of the park's cultural resources, where visitors can gain an understanding and appreciation of the park's interpretive themes associated with the history of the Shenandoah Valley from early settlement through the Civil War and beyond. This is the largest zone within the park and encompasses many of the park's historic resources.

### Natural Resource Zone

Areas encompassing the park's stream corridors and other natural areas having high biodiversity or other natural resource values such as the Panther Conservation Site identified by The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Areas in this zone may also contain important cultural sites such as troop stream crossings during the Battle of Cedar Creek. Natural resource protection is the primary goal within this zone.

### Town & Countryside Zone

Areas providing settings that contribute to the visitor experience but they generally have a lower protection priority because of existing land use and ownership patterns. Future resource studies may reveal certain sites within this zone that warrant higher protection priority.

### Contemporary Settlement Zone

Areas scattered throughout the park, typically on relatively small ownership parcels whose current uses are predominantly rural residences or suburban residential subdivisions. Such areas may contain historic structures and/or represent locations of events of significance. Unless findings of significance are determined by future study, areas in this zone are considered most appropriate for remaining in private ownership.




### Visitor Services Zone

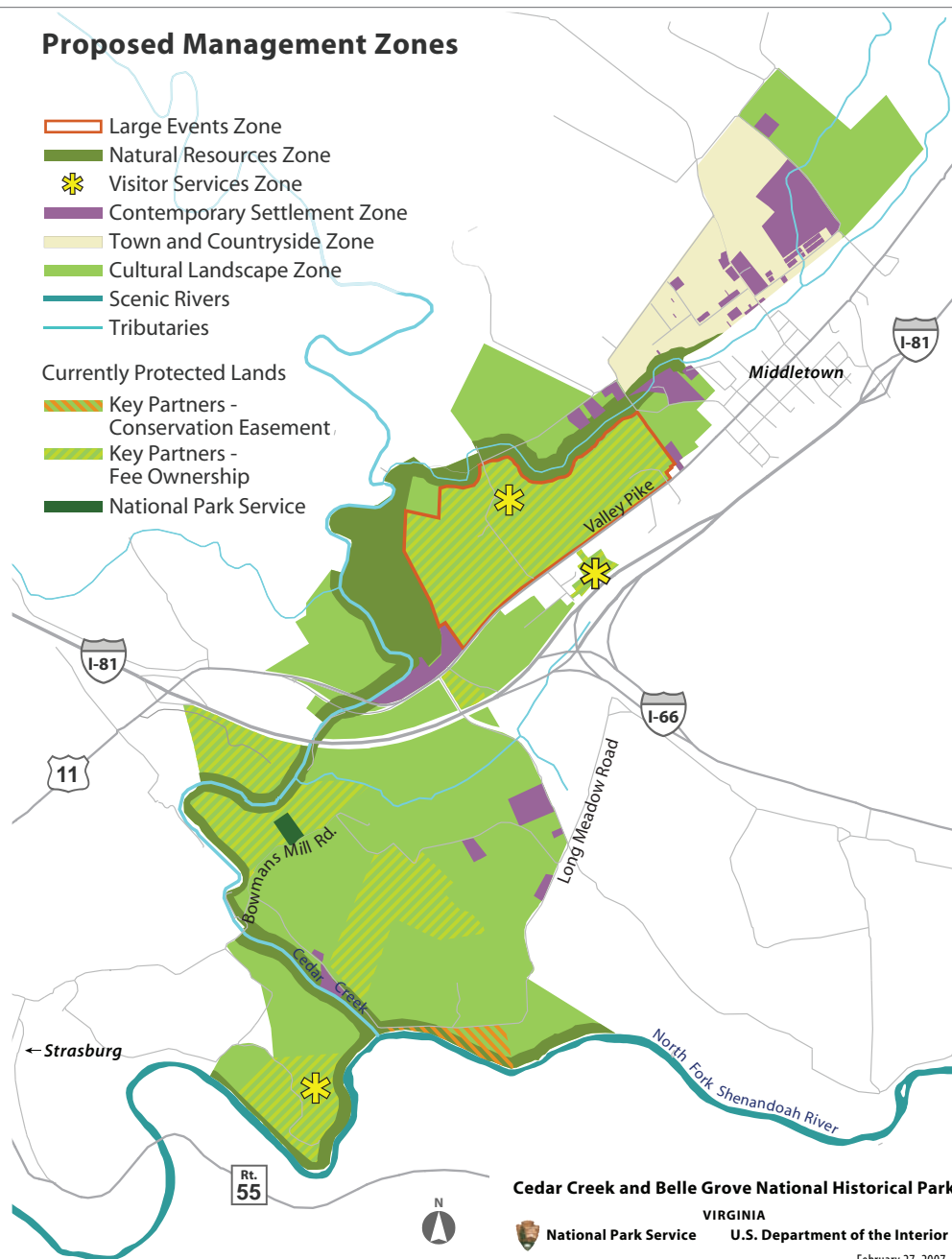
Areas where visitors can learn about the park, contact staff of the NPS and/or its key partners, and access restrooms and emergency assistance. Visitor contact facilities would be in this zone, but the park visitor center described in the action alternatives would be located outside the park.

## Proposed Management Zones

-  Large Events Zone
-  Natural Resources Zone
-  Visitor Services Zone
-  Contemporary Settlement Zone
-  Town and Countryside Zone
-  Cultural Landscape Zone
-  Scenic Rivers
-  Tributaries

### Currently Protected Lands

-  Key Partners - Conservation Easement
-  Key Partners - Fee Ownership
-  National Park Service



### Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park

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February 27, 2007

## Management Zones

The NPS uses management zones to describe the resource conditions and desired visitor experiences to be achieved in various areas of a park. As land within the park is acquired from willing sellers by the NPS and its Key Partners the prescriptions for these zones will guide future management actions. Each management zone specifies a particular combination of resource conditions, visitor experiences/activities, and appropriate types of development. The NPS working in consultation with the Park Advisory Commission and the Key Partners has identified six management zones for long-term management of Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP. Each alternative management concept for the park uses this set of management zones. The allocation of zones is identical for the action alternatives (see Proposed Management Zones above). The alternatives differ in terms of: 1) the extent to which land within the zones is anticipated to be acquired by the NPS and the Key Partners; 2) the extent to which potential resource management actions are implemented within the six zones, 3) the range of potential visitor experiences and facilities that are provided in the zones, and 4) the management roles of the NPS and the Key Partners.



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP  
P.O. Box 700  
Middletown, VA 22645

### YOUR COMMENTS ARE APPRECIATED

The National Park Service appreciates your input into the planning process and would like your feedback on these plan alternatives. You may provide your comments on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cebe>. While we prefer that you comment electronically you may also provide comments on the enclosed comment card, or simply by writing to:

Diann Jacox, Superintendent  
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP  
P.O. Box 700  
Middletown, VA 22645

### WHO IS ON THE GMP PLANNING TEAM?

The GMP Planning Team consists of the park Superintendent, park staff, and technical specialists from the National Park Service's Northeast Regional Office. The park's Federal Advisory Commission is advising NPS. The park's Key Partners are also assisting the GMP Planning Team. Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, is a private contractor that is assisting the National Park Service with the planning process. The park Superintendent and the Director of Northeast Regional Office of the National Park Service are the decision-makers in the planning effort. The Planning Team is coordinating with appropriate state, federal, and local agencies

## Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park General Management Plan Newsletter 1, March 2007

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GMP Step	Timeframe	Planning Activity	How You Can Be Involved
1	Fall 2005 to Winter 2006	<b>Set the stage for planning:</b> Assemble and gather background information, customize planning process, and establish contacts with participants	
2	Fall 2005 to Winter 2006	<b>Define GMP planning context and foundation; identify planning issues;</b> complete project scoping: Affirm the park's purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and fundamental and other important resources and values; identify issues and concerns	Participate in public open houses Send us your ideas and comments
3 We are Here	Summer 2006 to Winter 2007	<b>Develop preliminary management alternatives:</b> With NPS staff and public input identify a range of reasonable alternatives for the park's future; assess the effects of alternatives; select a preferred alternative	Review Newsletter 1 Send us your ideas and comments
4	Fall 2007	<b>Prepare and publish draft General Management Plan:</b> Prepare and publish a draft document that describes the GMP alternatives and impacts of implementing each; based on impacts and public input, identify a preferred alternative in the draft GMP	Review draft GMP Participate in public open houses Send us your ideas and comments
5	2008	<b>Revise and publish final plan:</b> Analyze public comments; prepare responses to comments; revise and publish final GMP; distribute to public; prepare and issue Record of Decision	Review Final GMP, including NPS responses to substantive public comments and official letters
6	2008 and beyond	<b>Implement the approved plan:</b> As funding allows, implement the GMP	Work with the NPS and Key Partners to implement the GMP, as funding allows





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# GMP Comment Card – Preliminary Alternatives



You may return this card by mail or hand-deliver it to the NPS office at 7718½ Main Street, Middletown. In returning this form by mail please fold in thirds at the dashed lines, tape closed, provide postage, and mail to:

Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

First Class  
U.S. Postage  
Required

Superintendent  
Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park  
7718½ Main Street  
P.O. Box 700  
Middletown, VA 22645

Please provide us with feedback on the preliminary alternatives for Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. If you need more space, you are encouraged to comment on-line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cebe>. There are on-line instructions on how to comment.

Which alternative do you like most? Least? Please explain.

Which elements or features of the alternatives do you like the best?

Which elements or features of the alternatives do you dislike?

What additional suggestions do you have to change or enhance the alternatives?

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*Thank you for taking the time to help us develop the general management plan for the future of your national park. Your ideas and concerns are important to us. Your comments are welcome at any time. However, they would be particularly helpful if we receive them by **April 30, 2007**.*

*This newsletter and additional information on the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove General Management Plan can be found by going to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/cebe>.*

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Please check this box if you would like to receive further information on the general management plan.