

SUMMARY OF 2009 PUBLIC AND NPS STAFF SCOPING COMMENTS Fort Donelson National Battlefield General Management Plan

May 12 Public Meeting at George Weeks Community Center in Murray, Kentucky

A total of 20 participants attended the public open house. A number of participants included those who since 1979 have been actively working towards the acquisition and donation of the Fort Heiman property to the National Park Service, and therefore were very interested in making the area accessible and interpreted for the public. Most of their comments focused on this property. A summary of the thoughts shared by this group include:

Access

- NPS should provide access for school groups
- Improve roads to and within the unit
- Consider a trail up from lake

Activities and Programs

- Provide passive recreation/interpretation
- Focus on what happened there
- Interpret Forrest's Johnsonville campaign
- Make story personal: use Holocaust Memorial model to connect with historical figures

Resource Management

- NPS should manicure only along trails and on earthworks (mow, trim trees)

Infrastructure

- Add signs explaining the features
- Consider an overlook at Heiman to look down on Tennessee River and Fort Henry
- Add benches constructed of natural material
- Water connection to site
- Construct a trail up from lake with signs and dock for boats

May 14 Park Staff Meeting

A meeting was held with national battlefield staff to provide their thoughts on a range of concerns. A summary of the thoughts shared by park staff follows:

New Lands

- How to manage new lands at Fort Heiman and Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) property: get visitors there, expand interpretation, appropriate level of development.
- What is the best way for coordinated management with Forest Service of Fort Henry?
- Are there additional lands with related resources that need protection?

Visitor Access

- How to expand tour route and improve way-finding to trust properties?
- How can we get visitors safely across highway 79?
- The park should consider alternative surfacing treatments that could be used for trails/roads that are more historic in appearance.
- How to improve accessibility to physical/vision impaired visitors?
- What is appropriate level of accessibility and interpretation at Dover Hotel?

Visitor Activities and Programs

- Need more youth programs, e.g. Junior Ranger
- Need to plan for visitor access and interpretation of new lands and implement quickly
- Need to tell cemetery story better
- Modernize story we tell, revive public relevance
- Need a plan for Heiman and Henry interpretation
- 150th anniversary of the Civil War: Expand scholarly interpretative themes and stories (underground railroad, etc.)
- Interpretative connections with other related sites
- What is appropriate level of non-traditional uses of park resources (recreation, etc.)?

Level of Infrastructure

- Need a new or remodeled Visitor Center that is accessible to all visitors
- Lack of parking in fort is a problem
- Need better trail management – look at new trails, better alignment, etc.
- What is appropriate level of infrastructure at Fort Heiman?

Resource Management

- What is desired condition for battlefield and earthwork management and maintenance?
- How to plan for future monument requests and the commemorative landscapes?
- Viewshed management and protection parkwide but especially along river and river batteries.
- Preserve landmarks, national resources
- Balance between community needs and battlefield preservation
- Interagency fire management, exotic species control, and riverbank stabilization
- Need expanded law enforcement presence and help with managing resource Inventory & Monitoring program

Potential Threats

- Surrounding development trends, political pressure to develop along all NB boundaries including next to cemetery
- Another threat is lack of NPS personnel

Public Involvement//Community Outreach

- Maintain current local outreach
- Get public “in the loop” – enhance communication with the public
- NPS should seek new partnership opportunities

May 14 Public Meeting, Stewart County Public Library in Dover, Tennessee

A total of 22 participants attended. A summary of the thoughts shared by this group include:

Access

- Access to and within CWPT lands (roads and trails). Let's use the land.
- Better trail management: Consider a walking trail down by the river, current trails are not accessible.
- Balance improving roads at Ft. Heiman with preserving resources, same thing for CWPT lands.

- Consider a one-way loop road through battlefield, safer for walkers also.
- Consider extending hours that park is open.

Activities and Programs

- Return living history program and additional interpretive programs
- Need better education of battle in local schools
- Consider holding a Kids day/Family day with activities for family groups
- NPS should sponsor education and seminars on military tactics
- Concerned that NPS does not promote the Dover Hotel and it is not open. A ranger has not been hired as stated in business plan.
- Need interpretation of CWPT lands
- Expand interpretation at Dover Hotel to include the theme as 19th century hotel serving riverboat travelers (est. 1853). Look at continuum of history and stories of the hotel.

Infrastructure

- Need for new or totally remodeled visitor center
- Encourage longer visits (e.g., barbecue pavilion or more picnic tables)
- Kiosks or additional signs at Fort Henry and Heiman (2 battles: 1862 and 1864).
- How to manage/maintain War Department tablets?
- Should NPS provide more cabins at the battlefield and rebuild existing cabin?

Resource Management

- What is appropriate level of maintenance for battlefield?
- There should be no conflict between history and nature
- What is appropriate level of restoration of historic features?

Partnerships

- Involve folks with fort, support partnership opportunities
- Use college kids (in service/internship)

Public Involvement//Community Outreach

- Advertise/promote the battlefield more
- Need for local, state, and national advocacy

Miscellaneous

- Prettiest small park in the country
- History is most important
- NPS should collect local family histories of battle period
- Greatest threat to increased public enjoyment is lack of interpretation and development of new lands/resources.