

Agency Official 106 Effect Report

*Rehabilitate and Resurface Hill-Ewell Drive on the Wilderness Battlefield in Orange and
Spotsylvania Counties, Virginia*

**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park
120 Chatham Lane
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22405**

Description and Purpose of Undertaking

Purpose

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park was authorized by an act of Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091). The purpose of the park, as stated in the act, is “to commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church ... to survey, locate, and preserve the lines of the opposing armies in said battles, to open, construct, and repair such roads, highways, paths, and other approaches as may be necessary to make the historical points accessible to the public and to students of said battles ... and together also with such additional land as the Secretary of War may deem necessary for monuments, markers, tablets, roads, highways, paths, approaches, and to carry out the general purposes of this Act.” By Executive Order 6166 in 1933 the park was transferred to the Department of the Interior to be administered by the National Park Service.

Need

Today, the National Park Service maintains approximately 30 miles of roads within the boundaries of the park, 27 miles of these roads are classified as public use park roads. These roads were constructed in the 1930s to provide visitors an opportunity to see the battlefields and the 38 miles of earthworks in the park. Parking areas were later installed to facilitate access to prominent sites along these roads and at designated stops along the park’s driving tour.

In 2010, over 2 million people visited the park and used the park roads. Increasing visitor-use and traffic strains the efficiency and carrying capacity of many of the park roads. Today, many of the roads are in need of attention and maintenance. Moreover, in the last ten years, the park has seen a steady increase in use of the park by recreational visitors. The park is seeking to find a way to maintain its park roads and reduce the frequency with which they require repaving and maintenance. To that end, the park is proposing to repave Hill-Ewell Drive on the Wilderness Battlefield using a chip seal application.

Property Description

A. Major Physical Components

1. Wilderness Battlefield – The area of the proposed project lies within the Wilderness Battlefield in Orange and Spotsylvania Counties. Wilderness Battlefield is comprised of 2,841.10 acres and is a mixture of open fields and wooded ridges, bisected by numerous streams and swamps. Hill-Ewell Drive, the primary battlefield tour road, is a paved road constructed in 1931 that stretches 3.37 miles from its intersection at State Route 20 to its intersection with County Route 621. Along its course, Hill-Ewell Drive contains a number of parking areas and vehicle pull-offs.

B. Historical Significance

1. Wilderness Battlefield – The project area lies within the core area of the May 1864 Battle of the Wilderness.

C. Archaeological Significance

1. Wilderness Battlefield - It is doubtful that archaeological resources will be adversely affected by the rehabilitation of the road, as it is within the footprint of the existing paved right-of-way.

D. Historical Landscapes

1. Wilderness Battlefield - It is doubtful that archaeological resources will be adversely affected by the rehabilitation of the road, as it is within the footprint of the existing paved right-of-way.

E. Historic Architecture

1. Wilderness Battlefield – Hill-Ewell Drive is on the park's List of Classified Structures as IDLCS #82114. In the draft of the park's most recent updated National Register documentation, this structure is considered contributing. It is doubtful that the project will have any effect on the structure, as the proposed paving is for only that areas that are already paved.

Description of Alternatives

Alternative A – No Action

This option would 1) hinder the fulfillment of the park's General Management Plan directive to interpret historic resources and 2) foster continued deterioration of the historic scene.

Alternative B – Resurface Hill-Ewell Drive Lots With In-Kind Materials

This option would involve repaving Hill-Ewell Drive with the standard asphalt. While this would maintain the existing road, it would not alleviate long-term maintenance problems. Constant resealing and repairs will result with this resurfacing and in a few years the road would require a new surface.

Alternative C – Resurface Hill-Ewell Drive with Chip Seal (Preferred)

Under this option, Hill-Ewell Drive would be repaved for its entire length and a chip seal coating added. Chip seal involves the application of a thin layer of liquid asphalt covered in a layer of small aggregate stones. In consultation with the Federal Highways Administration, the prevailing engineering wisdom is that chip seal will prolong the life of the road surface, eliminating the need to crack seal and providing a moisture barrier for the underlying pavement.

Park Consultation

The park has consulted and worked with the Federal Highways Administration and Virginia Department of Transportation in designing this project.

The proposal is being addressed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The proposal is being circulated among the park's Section-106 Team of Advisors for archaeology, historic landscapes, and architecture.

The proposal will go through a 30-day public comment and review period. During this time, the project will be posted on the National Park Service's Planning, Environment and Public Comment website. The park will also contact representatives of interested local organizations such as the University of Mary Washington's Department of Historic Preservation, Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield, Friends of the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields, Spotsylvania County, Civil War Trust, and the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust.

The project will undergo a 30-day comment and review period with the Virginia SHPO.

Effect Analysis

It is the park's opinion that this undertaking will have "no adverse effect" on historic resources.

Attached Supporting Documentation

- A. Park Map
- B. Photos

Conclusion

At important historic sites, the proposed undertaking would foster fulfillment of the park's General Management directives to interpret cultural resources but also protect those resources. This project will have "no adverse effect" upon historic resources.

Report Prepared By

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