



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office Of Communications

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

202 208-6843 phone
202 219-0910 fax

National Park Service News Release

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Contact: David Barna

Phone: 202-208-6843

Contact: Terrence Moore

Phone: 609-980-4822

National Park Service to Hold Public Meetings on Fort Monroe

The National Park Service (NPS) will conduct two separate meetings on July 19, 2011 to gather public comment on the potential establishment of Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia as a unit of the National Park System. The meetings follow-up on the June 29th gathering held by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and NPS Director Jonathan B. Jarvis at the Fort Monroe Bay Breeze Community Center. The objective of the meetings is to further assess public support for establishment of a national park at Fort Monroe.

The meetings will be held at the Hampton Roads Convention Center, 1610 Coliseum Drive in Hampton, Virginia. Two meetings are planned on July 19th to provide interested citizens with opportunities to attend and express their thoughts regarding a Fort Monroe national park designation either during the afternoon or in the evening. The first session will be conducted between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. The evening session will run from 6:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director of the NPS, called Fort Monroe “a resource of exceptional historic interest that bookends the beginning and end of slavery in the United States.” He said, “Both Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and I want any initiative leading to the potential establishment of a national park at Fort Monroe to be subject to an open and transparent process that evaluates the support of local, Commonwealth and national interests.

Individuals wishing to provide oral comments are encouraged to also present them in written form at the meetings. Cards will be available at the meetings for any “on-the-spot” comments. Comments may also be electronically submitted until 5:00 p.m. on July 26, 2011 by using the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (PEPC) at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/fortmonroe>. While the PEPC website is preferred, comments may alternately be emailed to megan_lang@nps.gov.

Fort Monroe, a 565-acre National Historic Landmark located in Hampton, Virginia, contains a Third System fortification built for coastal defense between 1819 and 1834. It is the largest stone fortification built in the United States, and has been called "The Fortress of Freedom" and "The Gibraltar of the Chesapeake." It is one of the few Union military installations in the South never occupied by Confederate forces during the Civil War. Fort Monroe served critical roles in protecting Hampton Roads and was the site of General Benjamin Butler's 1861 "Contraband Decision" which permitted untold thousands of enslaved people to find safe haven upon entering Union lines. It was the staging area for General George B. McClellan's 1862 Peninsula Campaign.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis was imprisoned at the fort for two years after the Civil War. Completely surrounded by a moat, the six-sided stone fort is the only one of its kind left in the United States that is still an active Army post. In operation for over 180 years, it ranks third as the most continuously used military installation in the nation.

-NPS-

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