

Management Alternatives: Sandy Hook

Visitor Use and Experience

Fort Hancock would be transformed into a bustling center of activity with a number of the Fort's buildings rehabilitated and adaptively reused for a wide variety of visitor services. Future uses would potentially include a restaurant, lodging, program space; recreation equipment rental and interpretive exhibits with the aim of creating a popular overnight destination year-round. On the bayside and the ocean, beaches visitors would find expanded recreational opportunities including instructional programming, equipment rentals, camping and more extensive visitors amenities like picnic areas, shade structures, trails/boardwalks, kayak landings, mooring fields, and observation blinds.

A shuttle system would relieve parking issues and traffic congestion and provide convenient access to the park. The shuttle will collect visitors from surrounding towns, transportation stops and the ferry terminal and drop them off at Sandy Hook's beaches and activity nodes.

Natural and Cultural Resource Management

Current natural resource management practices would be maintained and protection, research and monitoring of sensitive habitat areas like the beaches on the northern tip and the maritime forest would be increased. In this alternative, NPS would consider the widest variety of potential adaptive reuses for the Fort Hancock buildings ranging from educational uses and lodging to restaurants, conference space and offices. The Lighthouse, Life Saving Station, Battery Gunnison and Battery Potter would continue to be maintained and utilized for interpretation. No additional coastal defense batteries would be stabilized. The Nike Missile launch and radar sites would be interpreted offsite.

Fort Hancock

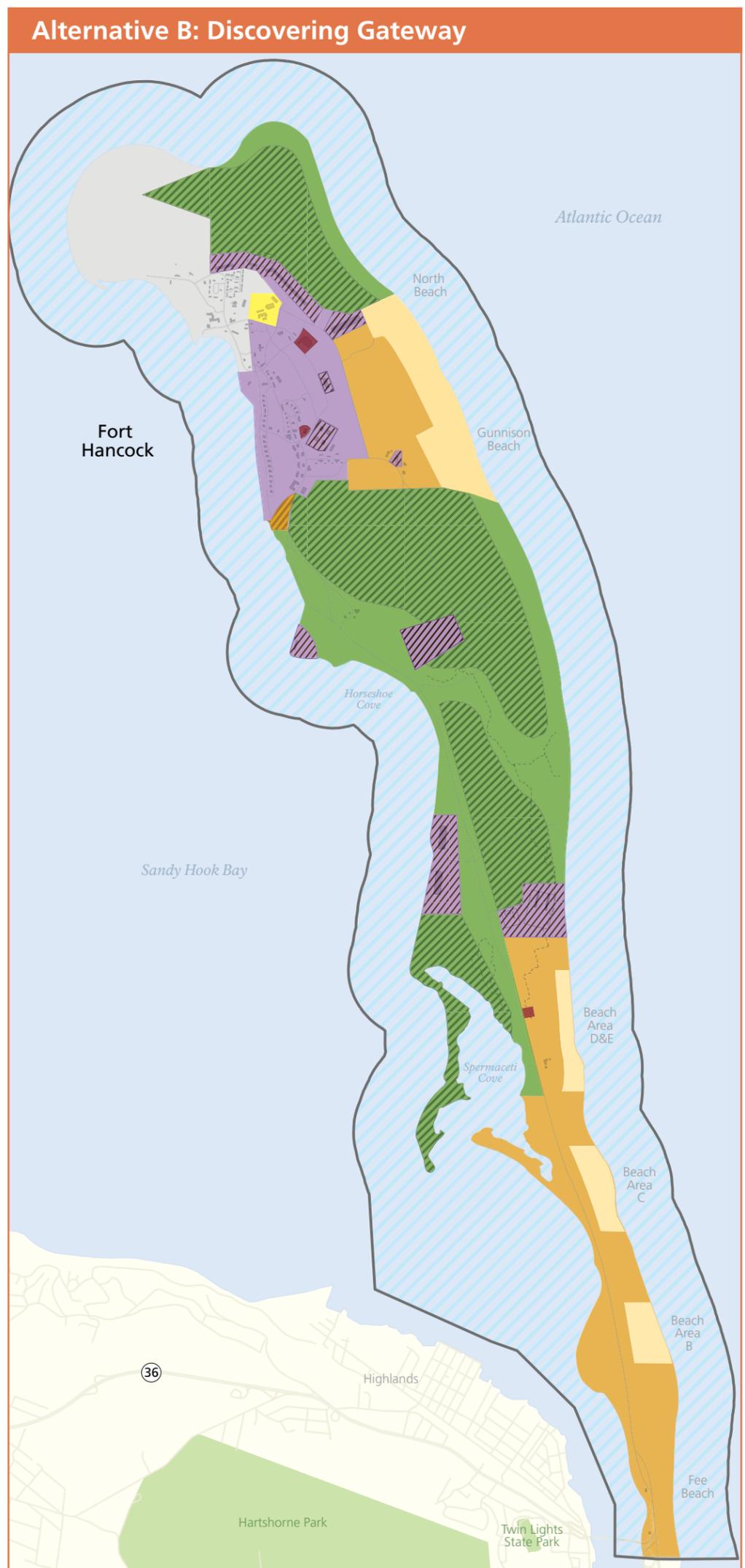
- Picnicking areas and walking trails expanded
- North Beach improved to accommodate more use between the Fort and the beach
- Buildings are adaptively reused for a wide variety of potential reuses ranging from lodging to restaurants, conference space and offices
- Minimal number of batteries are stabilized/interpreted

Bayside/Inland

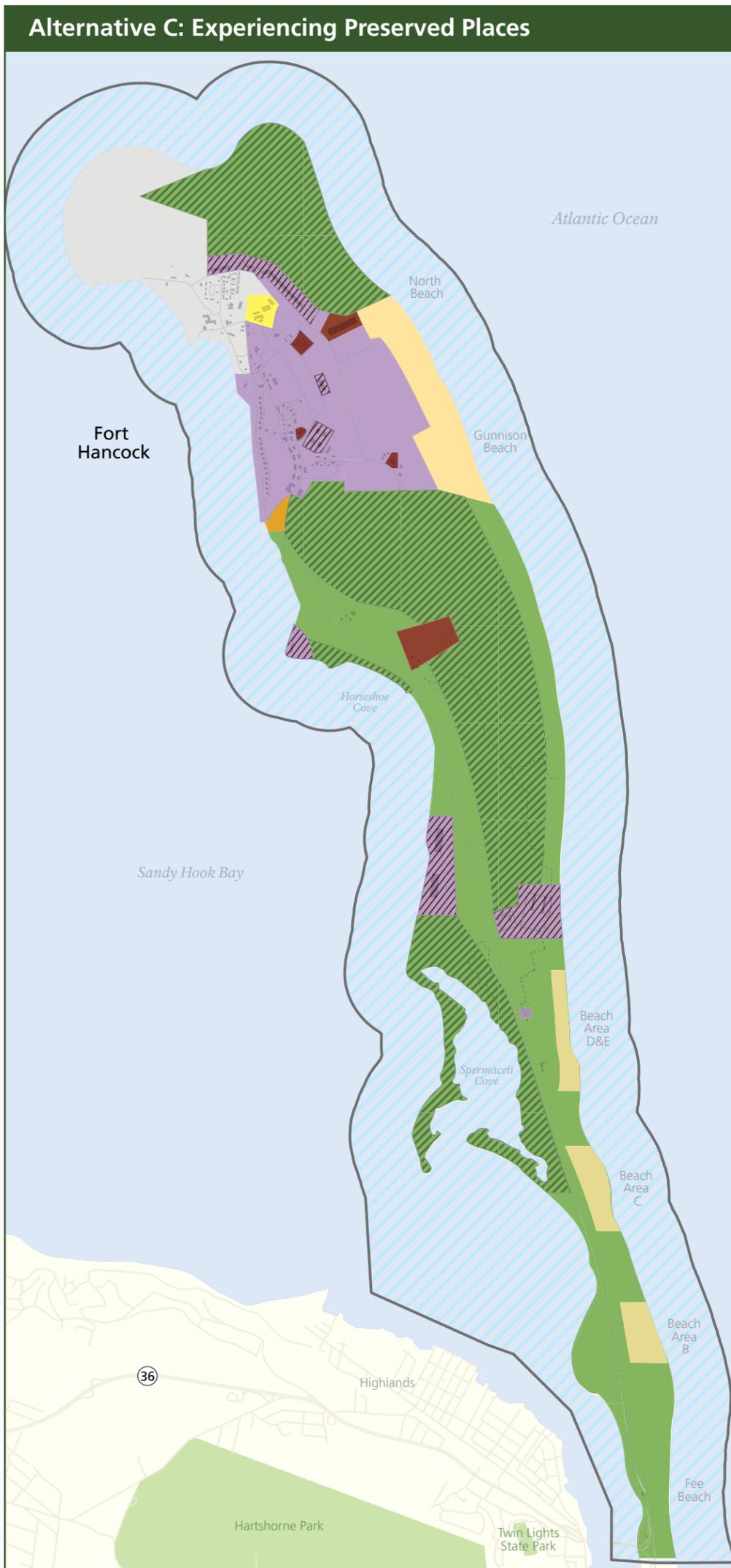
- Expanded trail network and camping at Horseshoe Cove
- Improved facilities for viewing wildlife including birding observation blinds, scopes, and maps/lists
- Improved fishing and wind sport support
- Visitor contact expanded into communities along with alternative transportation options and physical/programmatic connections

Oceanside

- Expanded multi-use trail network
- Equipment rental program and instructional programming
- Beach camping opportunities
- Additional amenities such as shade structures, picnic facilities and more concessions
- Expanded ferry service, internal shuttle, alternative transportation and parking options to accommodate increased beach footprint and greater use
- Interpret the Nike Missile resources offsite (e.g. in visitor center, online)



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Visitor Use and Experience

This alternative would highlight Sandy Hook's beaches, forests, wetlands and waters as living laboratories where visitors and volunteers are engaged in participatory science, education and stewardship. These programs would nurture personal connections with the coastal environment and inspire greater appreciation for the park's historic significance. Recreational uses would be maintained along the beach and bay as would current parking and circulation systems.

Natural and Cultural Resource Management

Protection and restoration of the beach dune community as well as forest, shrub and wetland habitats at Sandy Hook would be accelerated in this alternative. To reduce impacts on these sensitive and rare habitats, access would be tightly controlled and restricted in some cases. Aggressive control of invasive species, strengthening healthy communities and repairing beach erosion would be management priorities. Additionally, research and monitoring of the unit's habitats would increase.

Of all alternatives, the greatest effort to preserve the Fort Hancock historic buildings occurs in this alternative. Fort Hancock buildings would be adaptively re-used for many uses including a historic preservation training center that offers instruction in restoring and rehabilitating historic structures. Select batteries are preserved and interpreted through guided tours and interpretive media including Batteries Potter and Gunnison. The Fort's cultural landscape and structures would become a training ground for historic preservationists. Students, partners and volunteers trained at Sandy Hook would be mobilized to participate in historic resource stewardship projects throughout Gateway. The Nike Missile radar site would be converted into an interpreted, visitor-ready site.

Fort Hancock

- The greatest effort to preserve the Fort Hancock historic buildings
- Attracts a historic preservation vocational school and other educational-related uses
- Historic setting of coastal defense structures is improved

Bayside/Inland

- New nature trail and observation facilities
- Enhanced protection, monitoring and study of natural systems and processes

Oceanside

- Recreational uses and facilities maintained in current locations
- Nike Missile radar buildings and equipment repaired and stabilized
- New tours and interpretive media highlight coastal defense history
- Enhance monitoring, study and protection of natural systems and processes
- Beaches remain available for bathing but Holly Forest, dunes, and salt marshes are highly protected
- Engage volunteer stewards in dune habitat restoration projects
- Lodging developed at Life Saving Station

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Visitor Use and Experience

Sandy Hook would remain a popular water-based recreation destination where visitors would find additional launch sites, a water trail, camping facilities and boating facilities all designed to facilitate the coast experience. With its lighthouse, lifesaving station and long coastline, Sandy Hook would emerge as Gateway's focal point for maritime heritage interpretation. The preservation of these iconic structures along with expanded programming, activities and interpretive media would engage visitors in the maritime story. Likewise, Sandy Hook's mosaic of coastal habitats would provide unique opportunities for experiencing and learning about natural systems and native plant communities, several of which are very rare in the region. With expanded ferry service and a shuttle system, both water and land-based access to Sandy Hook would be improved.

Natural and Cultural Resource Management

Natural resource management efforts are focused on the protection, study and restoration of the unit's beach/dune habitat and are more extensive than any of the other alternatives. Working with partners, management would endeavor to better understand the natural systems and develop strategies for sustaining the area's native biodiversity, reconnecting fragmented habitat, controlling invasives, and protecting threatened and endangered species. Through bioengineering and other proactive measures, management would build resiliency to climate change within the natural environment and protect Sandy Hook's beaches. The local impacts of global climate change and rising sea level would also be an interpretive focal point and management priority at Sandy Hook under this alternative. The park, in collaboration with partners, would demonstrate leadership in pro-active adaptation and management in the face of climate change and sea level rise. Buildings at Fort Hancock are adaptively reused in a way that enhances appreciation and understanding of the coastal environment. Similar to Alternative C, the Nike missile radar site would be converted it into an interpreted, visitor-ready site.

Fort Hancock

- Becomes a center for maritime-related interpretation and programming and coastal research
- Buildings rehabbed for visitor uses such as lodging
- Most ferry and water taxi use
- Select batteries are stabilized and water vistas created

Bayside/Inland

- New area developed for camping and water recreation
- Expanded water-based recreation with the development of a water trail and mooring field

Oceanside

- Expanded multi-use trail network
- Equipment rental program and instructional programming
- Beach camping opportunities
- Additional amenities such as shade structures, picnic facilities and more concessions
- Expanded ferry service, internal shuttle, alternative transportation and parking options to accommodate increased beach footprint and greater use
- Intensive beach/dune habitat protection, monitoring, and study
- Expanded coastal habitat and maritime interpretation.
- Convert Nike Missile site to an interpreted, visitor-ready site
- Expanded boat use including interpretive boat tours and boat trips linking Sandy Hook with other sites.
- Connections to Twin Lights and other local sites

