



## Public Scoping and NEPA Process for Fort Davis National Historic Site Fire Management Plan

### Project Scoping for Environmental Assessment

February 19, 2013

The National Park Service (NPS) is starting the process to update the Fire Management Plan (FMP) for Fort Davis National Historic Site (FODA). Before this update occurs, the NPS is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA is part of the process to update management strategies, manage vegetative fuels, and update terminology. A focus of this planning is to protect and enhance Park cultural and natural resources, and to create and improve defensible space. This process will be utilized to gather public input and suggestions for this planning effort. This brochure initiates the public scoping for the EA.

#### Background

FODA encompasses the buildings, ruins and artifacts, foundations, and cultural landscape of two important frontier military posts active from 1854-1862 and 1867-1891. African-American troops, popularly known today as “Buffalo Soldiers” (9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry and 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry) were garrisoned here while involved in struggles with Apache and Comanche Tribes. The troops stationed at Fort Davis protected emigrants, freighters, mail coaches, and travelers along the San Antonio-El Paso Road. This road was a transcontinental route going through west Texas to California and the surrounding frontier. Fort Davis is one of the best remaining examples in the Southwest of a typical post-Civil War frontier military post and a reminder of the role the military played in the settlement and development of the western frontier. (For more information on FODA visit <http://nps.gov/foda>).

During these historic periods, the area was more open and less forested, a result of the intense human activities such as livestock grazing and firewood gathering. Since ending those activities the vegetation has responded by growth of brush species and mesquite; the brush has increased in density and height due to fire suppression. This more abundant vegetation has developed fuel loading that lends itself to high severity wildfires that could threaten visitors, staff and firefighters, cultural sites, park structures, and neighboring lands. The NPS wants to take planned steps to manage the vegetation in a responsible way. A new FMP will assist the NPS in meeting FODA management goals.

FODA plans to continue to suppress all wildfire ignitions on its 523 acres of federal land, but also to engage in active vegetation management activities. These active measures will better protect cultural sites, facilities,

neighboring properties, and natural resource values. A new FMP will also include updates in national fire policy and terminology. The Categorical Exclusion that was utilized in the 2005 FMP is no longer available. This EA will replace the NEPA compliance work in support of a new Fire Management Plan.

#### Updating the Fire Management Plan

FODA plans to adhere to the following broad goals as it updates its Fire Management Plan:

1. Protection of human life is the first priority in all wildland fire management activities.
2. Historic properties will be protected from wildland fire and suppression activity damages. The NPS will also consider in-park actions that minimize the threat to adjacent private property.
3. Activities will occur to restore and maintain FODA’s vegetation communities and protect natural resource values.
4. FODA will strive to enhance working relationships with appropriate federal, state, and local cooperators.
5. FODA will ensure adjacent communities are informed about park fire management activities, and that fire-related concerns are considered.

The EA process started with internal scoping by NPS specialists and staff on December 7, 2012. The NPS is preparing this EA in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that: 1) explores management alternatives to meet Park objectives, 2) evaluates potential impacts to Park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to minimize the degree of these impacts.

A “No Action Alternative” includes suppression of all wildfires. Under this alternative, no fuel reduction, defensible space, prescribed burning, or targeted herbicide activities would occur. The attendant negative effects would include continued accumulations of hazardous fuels and the associated risk to human structures, people, and to park natural and cultural resources.

The only “Proposed Action Alternative” developed so far would include suppressing fires utilizing the appropriate response, but FODA would engage in active vegetation (fuel) manipulation activities including:

- prescribed burning in designated areas for the purposes of maintaining defensible space around

improvements and cultural sites, altering the vegetation for historic and cultural landscape maintenance, restoring natural habitat, and controlling invasive plant species;

- utilizing hand-held mechanical equipment during manual fuel reduction work for the same purposes; and
- limited herbicide use as a follow up treatment to vegetation cutting treatments, and/or spot treatments on targeted brush to reduce encroachment, and on invasive (non-native) plant species.

Additional objectives and mitigation tactics would be developed as part of this EA process to minimize impacts to people, park resources and manmade improvements. Examples of potential mitigation activities include limiting time periods when prescribed burns would occur, avoiding activities that cause erosion or threaten archeological sites, and utilizing techniques to minimize smoke. All prescribed burns would have formal objectives developed under a separate burn plan, and would only be implemented by qualified fire personnel.

There are two formal opportunities for the public to comment: during this initial project scoping, and again following the release of the EA document. You are invited to participate in this process by voicing your ideas, suggestions, comments, or concerns related to FODA fire management activities. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EA and FMP.

## Overview of the Process

The basic steps of the NEPA process for this project include:

- **Public scoping period (February 19 – March 19, 2013)\***
- **Public scoping meeting, open house format, March 5, 2013 from 5:30 PM until 7:30 PM, at Fort Davis Auditorium.\***
- Preparation of the EA (public release expected summer 2013)
- **Public review of the EA\***
- Analysis of public comment on the EA
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision

\* indicates formal opportunities for public comment

## Resources and Concerns

The Environmental Assessment will analyze potential impacts

to a number of resources including:

Public Health and Safety, Soil, Air Quality, Vegetation, Wildlife, Invasive Species (including plant and animal species), Species of Special Concern, Cultural and Historic Resources, Cultural Landscapes, and Adjacent Landowners.

## Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to consider as you develop comments on this project:

- Are there any missing issues or concerns that should be addressed in the EA?
- Are there other options, alternatives, or information that you think should be considered?
- Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the FODA Fire Management Program?

## How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/foda>

Comments may also be sent via email to the superintendent, [john\\_morlock@nps.gov](mailto:john_morlock@nps.gov). If you are unable to submit comments electronically, then you may submit written comments to:

Attention: Superintendent  
Fort Davis National Historic Site  
PO Box 1379  
Fort Davis, TX 79734

You may also hand-deliver written comments to the Fort Davis National Historic Site visitor center at 101 Lt. Henry Flipper Drive.

**Please provide all public scoping comments by March 19, 2013.**

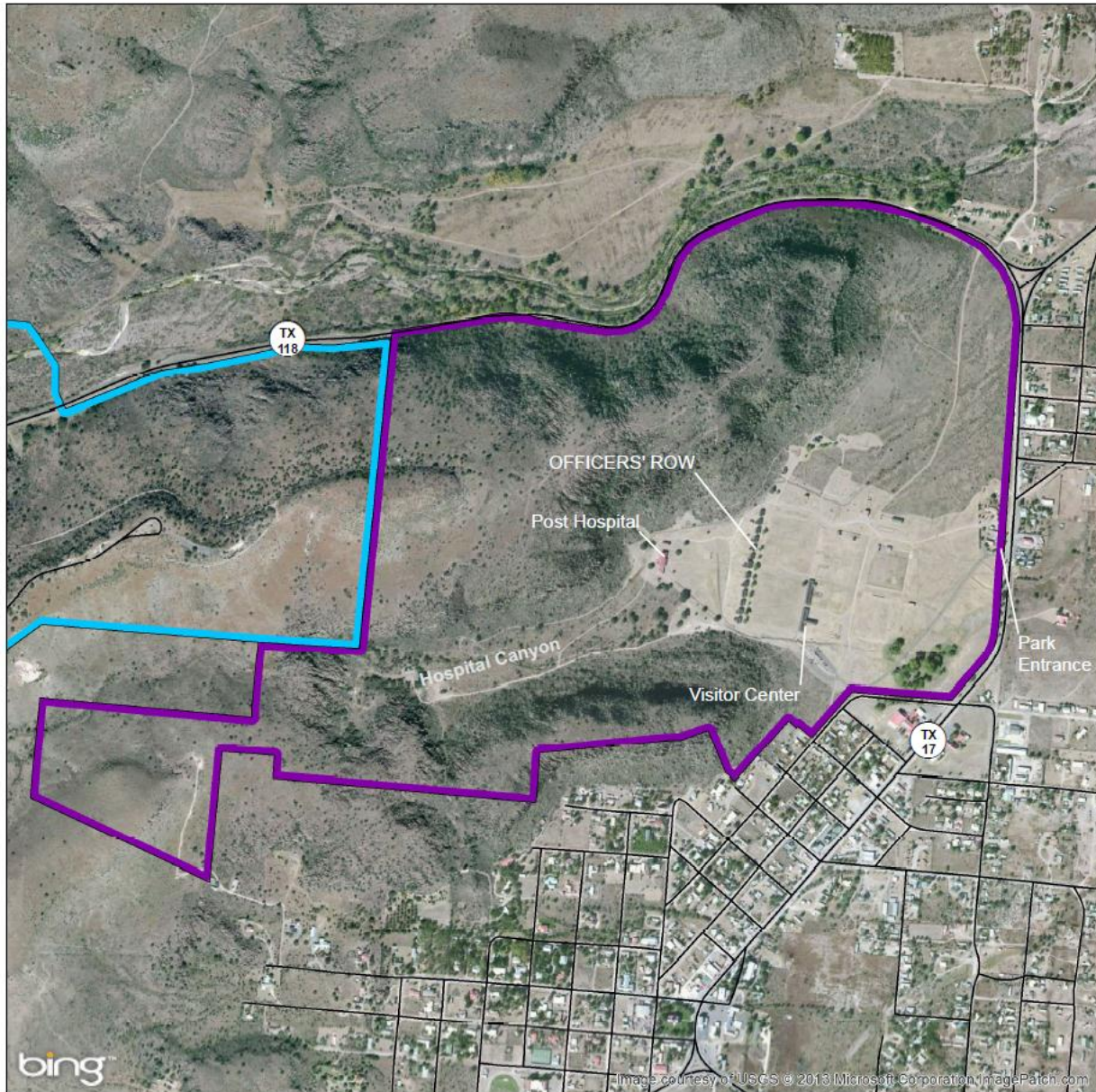
If you wish to be added to or removed from the Park's mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response.

# Fort Davis National Historic Site

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Texas



## Legend

- Fort Davis National Historic Site
- Davis Mountains State Park
- Major Roads



1:13,000

Datum: NAD 83 13 UTM  
DSC/February 2013

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

