

Manassas National Battlefield Park



General Management Plan / EIS Newsletter
January 1997

From The Superintendent

Dear Friends:

I want to thank you for taking an interest in the future of Manassas National Battlefield Park. We stand at the threshold of a very exciting time for the park. Your help will be invaluable as we, together, prepare for the 150th anniversary of the First and Second Battle of Manassas in 2011 and 2012, and the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016. To address problems currently facing the park and to guide management decisions through these important watershed events, we are developing a new general management plan. The general management plan is the guiding document for protecting the resources of the battlefields and telling these important stories to visitors.

The development of this plan is quite an undertaking. Your ideas and concerns are very important to us. I was encouraged by the interest displayed at our first public meetings last spring. We received hundreds of suggestions from you, and have taken all of your ideas and concerns into consideration as we have worked toward developing our plan. I want each of you to continue work with us.

This newsletter is an opportunity for us to report back with the exciting concepts you and our park staff have developed for how the battlefields may look and be managed in the future. I am grateful for your interest, and hope you stay involved with the project.

Sincerely,

*Robert K. Sutton, Ph.D.
Superintendent*

BACKGROUND

Manassas National Battlefield Park was established by secretarial order on May 10, 1940. Since then, the park has grown from 1,604 acres to its current size of 5,071 acres. It now includes the majority of key battlefield areas.

The park's most important resources are the large tracts of land that represent the scene as it existed at the time of the battles.

The fields and wooded areas, the valleys, ridges, and streams help define the battlefields. Also included in this scene are several historic buildings, the Groveton Confederate Cemetery, the Stone Bridge, miles of historic road traces, and numerous other historic and archeological resources. The park also contains more than 20 monuments and markers, two of which were erected by soldiers

shortly after the close of the Civil War.

The Park averages nearly a million visitors a year. The visitor center, which is normally the initial stop for first-time visitors, provides basic orientation, information, and interpretation about the park through audiovisual presentations, exhibits, literature, and personal services. In addition, the park has

numerous self-guiding interpretive walking trails, a driving tour, and an extensive series of wayside exhibits.

WHAT IS A GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN?

The National Park Service is developing a new general management plan (GMP) and associated environmental impact statement (EIS) for Manassas National Battlefield Park. The park's current plan was completed in 1983. In the 15 years since the plan's completion, large tracts of the battlefields were added to the park. This new plan will take a fresh look at the park and how it responds to the challenges of the next 15 to 20 years. A general management plan provides the basic philosophy and broad direction for long-term decisions, activities, and development at a park.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR?

This past year was very busy. The planning team concentrated on assembling technical information and working with organizations and the public to set goals and understand concerns about the park. This preliminary work defined the scope of the project.

To gain a better understanding of past, current, and future conditions in the park, we initiated several studies and data gathering efforts.

With the assistance of Prince William and Fairfax counties, we developed a computer database, more specifically a geographic information system (GIS), to assist in decision making. The system allows park personnel to combine many types of resource information (e.g., soils, property ownership, roads, topography, vegetation cover) and analyze and compare current and historic conditions.

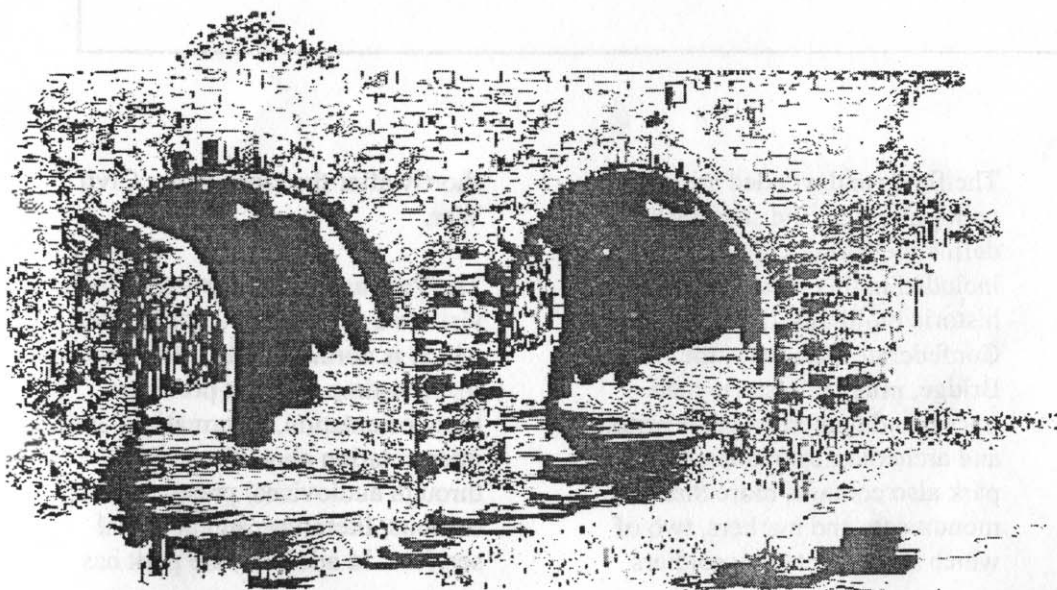
In 1996 National Park Service staff completed a visitor survey and

cultural landscape inventory. The visitor survey allows us to understand how visitors use the park, perceive the park, and feel about the future of the park. The cultural landscape inventory provides a better understanding of the battlefield landscape and its evolution over time.

In 1996 we also completed a transportation study to help the planning team understand current traffic volumes and patterns as well as projected future conditions in the park. The study also identified short-term safety improvements. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the National Park Service are working cooperatively to institute some of these recommendations.

In addition to the National Park Service Transportation Study, the park is also active in a variety of transportation studies being conducted by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Perhaps the most important of these is the route 29 bypass study, which examines possible alternatives for US Highway 29 which currently runs through the park.

Our public involvement efforts began in the spring of 1996. In March, the park superintendent sent an invitation from the park to the more than 800 people and groups on the initial park mailing list. The letter described the effort to develop a new plan and invited groups and the general public to participate in the project by completing a mailback comment form describing issues and concerns they had. The newsletter was also posted on the park's World Wide Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/mana>), and electronic comments were



encouraged to be sent to the park at mana_superintendent@nps.gov.

The letter also announced public meetings that were held March 18 and 20, 1996. More than 100 people attended the meetings and had the opportunity to learn about the planning effort, ask questions, and comment on the park. The mailback comment form was also distributed at the public meetings. The park received more than 250 comment forms.

We also held informal meetings to talk about the planning project at an early stage and hear the public's questions and concerns. These meetings gave us an opportunity to discuss the project with the staffs and elected officials of local governments, as well as groups affiliated with the park or those with a particular interest in issues that concern the park.

From the meetings and comment forms, we learned that people are concerned with many aspects of the park, including traffic, trails, adjacent development, historic structures, interpretation, the natural environment, visitor facilities, partnerships, the historic scene, and recreational uses.

Our next step was to develop general goals for the park. Having reviewed people's concerns as well as their ideas for the future of the park, we then examined the results of the data gathering efforts, looked at the core reasons the park was established, and identified the significant resources and stories of the battlefields. From this information, we established goals for the park's future and suggested several conceptual alternatives to achieve these goals.

PLANNING PHASES AND SCHEDULE

1

Gather Data and Establish Park Goals

- initiate studies and develop GIS
 - review enabling legislation
 - identify park's significant resources
 - develop park goals
- (1995 - Summer 1996)

PUBLIC MEETINGS, MAIL-IN AND INTERNET COMMENTS, MEETINGS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

2

Develop Conceptual Alternatives

- suggest a wide range of conceptual alternative strategies to achieve goals
- (summer 1996 - fall 1996)

MEETINGS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

3

Prepare Alternatives Document

- produce a newsletter that presents park goals and conceptual alternatives
- (winter 1996 - February 1997)

NEWSLETTER, PUBLIC MEETINGS, MAIL-IN AND INTERNET COMMENTS, MEETINGS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

4

Prepare Draft GMP/EIS

- refine conceptual alternatives and analyze environmental and socioeconomic impacts of all alternatives
 - NPS Field Director selects a preferred alternative
 - prepare and distribute draft GMP/EIS
- (summer 1997 - fall 1997)

PUBLIC AND AGENCY REVIEW OF DRAFT GMP/EIS, PUBLIC MEETINGS, MAIL-IN AND INTERNET COMMENTS, MEETINGS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

5

Prepare Final GMP/EIS and Record of Decision Begin Implementation

- based on environmental analysis and public comment, develop a final plan
 - sign record of decision
 - identify partners and funding sources; program park activities to implement plan
- (winter 1997 - spring 1998)

AGENCY REVIEW, PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

INITIAL CONCLUSIONS . . .

Your ideas and the results of the early data-gathering efforts shaped the goals, principles and strategies that will be the core of the general management plan.

Why Was Manassas National Battlefield Park Established?

To ensure that planning and management decisions are consistent with the original reasons for which the park was established, an early step in the planning process was to develop the following purpose statement.

The purpose of Manassas National Battlefield Park is to preserve the historic landscape containing historic sites, buildings, objects, and views which contribute to the national significance of the First and Second Battles of Manassas, for the use, inspiration, and benefit of the public

Why Is Manassas National Battlefield Park Important to the Nation?

The purpose statement does not tell everything about the park. The National Park Service uses significance statements to provide details that describe the primary ideas, events, and resources that make the park important. By recognizing these features, we ensure that future management, operations, and possible development decisions protect and enhance the things that make the park special.

The first and second battles of Manassas are nationally significant because

The First Battle of Manassas was the first major land battle of the Civil War.

The First Battle of Manassas dispelled all preconceived notions of a short war, and the fact that 900 Americans were killed on the battlefield was graphic proof that civil war would be a protracted bloody struggle.

The Second Battle of Manassas brought the Confederacy to the height of its power and opened the way for the first Confederate campaign into the north.

The two battles were the largest fought in the western hemisphere up to that time.

In addition, many of the resources in the park contribute to its national significance, our appreciation of the battlefield events, and our understanding of the social and economic impacts of the Civil War.

The park

is one of only a few Civil War battlefields that include the majority of the actual battlefield areas where troops formed, fought, and died.

provides visitors with an opportunity for first-hand experience with the features that shaped the battles, including the following:

the structures, road traces, sites, cemeteries, monuments, artifacts, and archeological resources

that date from the battle (1861-1862) and commemorative (1865-1940) time periods

the woodlands, fields, streams, rolling hills, and views that are representative of the landscape that existed at the time of the battles

What Are We Trying to Accomplish at Manassas National Battlefield Park? What Are Our Goals for the Park?

Because the intended lifespan of the general management plan is 15-20 years, the goals for the future of the park are the most important pieces of the plan. These goals will shape what the park will look like, feel like, and how it will operate in the future. They will establish the general condition of cultural resources, natural resources, and visitor experiences we would like to see in the park in the future. As the planning process progresses, these statements can be used as criteria for judging how comprehensive and effective a given alternative is.

The purpose of Manassas National Battlefield Park will be fulfilled when the following conditions are achieved:

The historic landscape is maintained in such a way that it gives visitors an understanding of the events of the two battles.

Significant cultural resources of the battles and their commemoration are identified, preserved, protected,

maintained, and restored where appropriate.

Visitors learn about the battles through a variety of quality interpretive and educational experiences, programs, and facilities.

Modern intrusions into the historic landscape are minimal.

The park is cooperating with other local, state and national Civil War sites to tell the story of the Manassas battles in the Civil War and to tell the overall Civil War story.

The rural and agrarian character of views outside the park is maintained.

All park uses and visitor experiences are conducted in a manner that is compatible with the park's purpose.

Roads within the park are used primarily by visitors and for park operations.

Park facilities and services provide visitors with a high-quality experience and support the park's purpose.

Are There Any Other Legal Mandates or Considerations?

The Manassas National Battlefield Park Amendments of 1988 (P.L. 100-46) directly affect the general management plan. The act, which expanded the park to nearly 5,100 acres, also stated that the secretary of the interior shall

- 1.) Cooperate with the Commonwealth of Virginia and local governments in order to promote and achieve scenic preservation of views from within the park through zoning and other means determined feasible; and
- 2.) Conduct a study, in consultation with the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Federal Highway Administration, and Prince William County, regarding the relocation of Routes 29 and 234 in, and in the vicinity of, the park

While developing a program for protecting historic views is beyond the scope of the plan, we incorporated the importance of historic views into the park goals and will identify views that require specific attention.

Throughout the planning process we will work with the Federal Highway Administration, the

Virginia Department of Transportation, Prince William and Fairfax counties, and others to identify possible alternatives for Virginia Highway 234 and US Highway 29 through the park. As part of the GMP, we assume the roads are primarily for visitor use and park operations.

To ensure future management decisions are sensitive to environmental quality, public service, and the management of the National Park System, Manassas National Battlefield Park is also subject to a large body of legal and administrative mandates. Examples of these mandates that directly relate to preparing the plan are as follows:

- Clean Air Act
- Clean Water Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 regarding the management of floodplains and wetlands
- National Environmental Policy Act
- National Historic Preservation Act
- National Park Service Organic Act



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

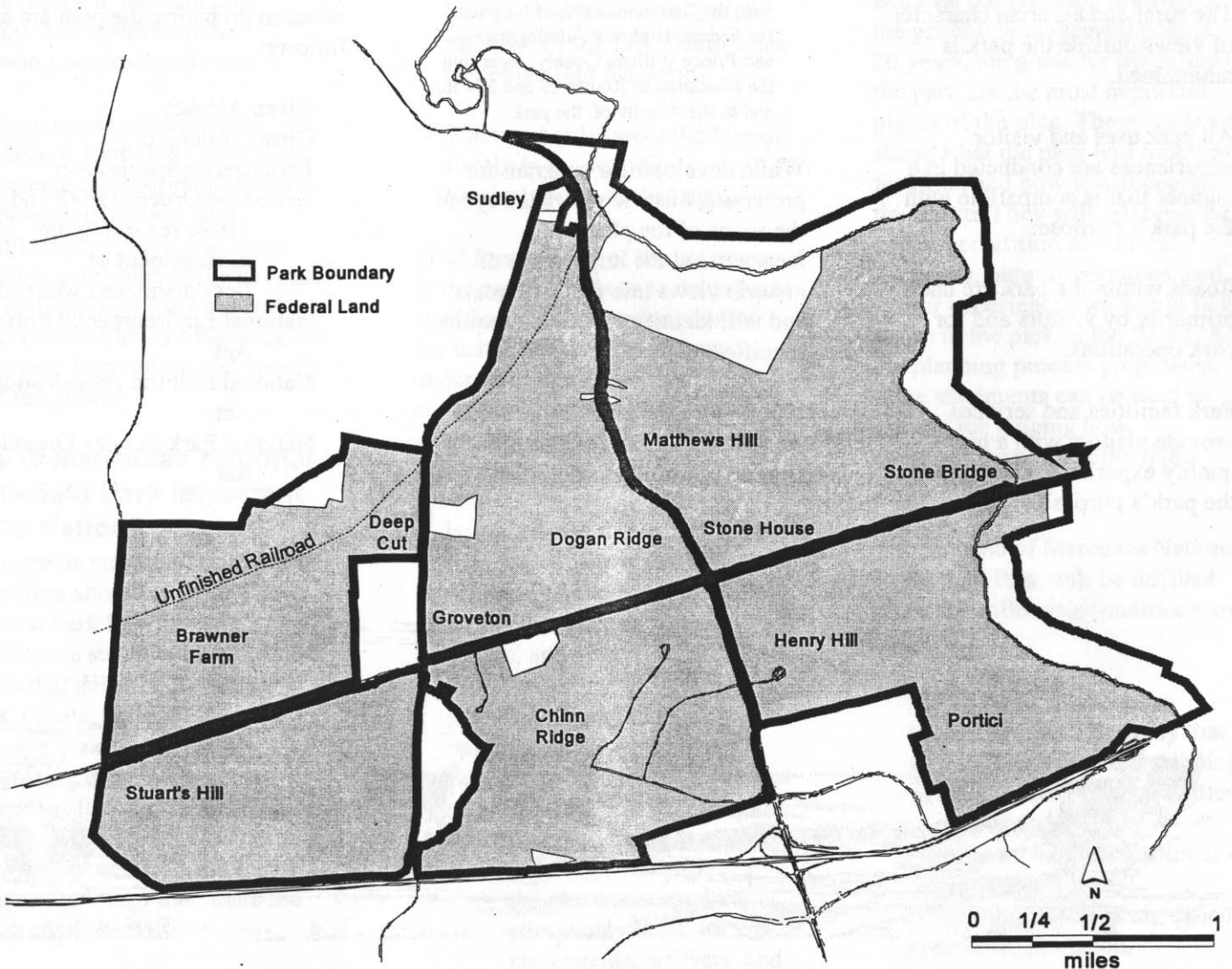
To look at different ways in which these goals could be achieved, we developed several conceptual alternatives for the future of the park. Each alternative concept presents a different way the park could look in the future. Based on your comments, we will refine these ideas and perhaps combine and/or add additional alternatives. The alternatives that appear in the draft plan include more detailed information concerning how the specific resources of the park would be used and protected.

Alternative A: Continuing Current Management Practices (No Action)

Alternative A would make only minor changes to current park management. Visitor use and interpretation would be concentrated at the most recognizable features in the park. Orientation and visitor services for both battles would be carried out from a central location.

Preliminary Alternative B: The Two Battles of Manassas - a Comprehensive Understanding of Each Battle

Alternative B would present and interpret the battles as distinct military events. Visitors would gain a thorough understanding of both battles by visiting and experiencing the many sites associated with each. The battlefields could almost be visited as two separate parks, with stand-alone visitor areas and auto-tour routes for each battle. In this alternative, the restoration of the historic scene would be important to help visitors understand the events and tactics associated with each battle.



**Preliminary Alternative C:
The Defining Moments of the
Battles of Manassas - an
Understanding of the
Principal Events**

In alternative C, visitors would be encouraged to visit the two or three sites that witnessed the "watershed" events of the battles. Interpretation of these general events, the outcomes of the battles, and the larger story of the Civil War, would be stressed over the detailed military tactics of the Manassas battles. Although trail access to other sites in the park would be provided, interpretation and visitor uses would be concentrated in areas that illustrate the "defining" moments of the battles. Restoring the historic scene in these areas would be important to help visitors understand these principal events.

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE?

Your ideas concerning the park goals and preliminary alternatives are very important to us. Please take time to fill out the enclosed comment form and mail it to us or send us your ideas electronically at mana_superintendent@nps.gov. Please be sure to have your comments to us by **March 14, 1997**.

We will also have **public workshops at 7:30 P.M. on February 10 and 11, 1997**, at the park visitor center. The visitor center is in Manassas National Battlefield Park along Virginia Route 234, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ miles north of the I-66 interchange for Manassas. The meetings will give

you an opportunity to talk to the National Park Service personnel involved in the project and to discuss your comments and ideas.

In February and March 1997, we will meet with interested groups and agencies. If your organization would like someone from the National Park Service to speak to a group, please contact the park at (703)754-1861 to make arrangements.

Throughout the spring and summer we will refine the alternatives and prepare the draft plan. The draft plan is expected to be available for public review in the fall of 1997. Our next round of public meetings will occur at that time.

