

National Park Service | Department of the Interior



LOWER MISSISSIPPI

Special Resource Study | Newsletter 1 | May 2016



Letter from the *National Park Service*

Dear Friends,

On December 19, 2014, Congress passed Public Law 113-291, which directed the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a special resource study for Fort St. Philip, Fort Jackson, the Head of Passes, and any related and supporting historical, cultural, or recreational resources located in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. The special resource study will be developed over the next two years and will evaluate the national significance of these areas, and the suitability and feasibility of designating them as a unit of the national park system.

The purpose of this special resource study is to provide Congress with information about the quality and condition of historical, cultural, or recreational resources associated with these areas, as well as their relationship to congressionally established criteria for significance, suitability, feasibility, and the need for NPS management. The special resource study may also weigh other management options. Based on the special resource study, the NPS will determine whether Fort St. Philip, Fort Jackson, and other related or supporting sites meet the criteria for inclusion in the national park system, and make a recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior, which would then forward the recommendation to Congress.

During the initial phase of the special resource study, the NPS will host two public open house meetings to provide members of the public an opportunity to learn about the study process, talk with national park service staff, ask questions, and share ideas for the study.

Tuesday

June 7th, 2016
6:00 – 8:00 PM
Buras Auditorium
35619 Hwy 11
Buras, LA 70041

Wednesday

June 8th, 2016
6:00 – 8:00 PM
Belle Chasse Auditorium
8398 Highway 23
Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Thank you for taking the time to learn about and comment on this study effort. You may also learn about the study process and provide your comments online by visiting http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LMIS_SRS.

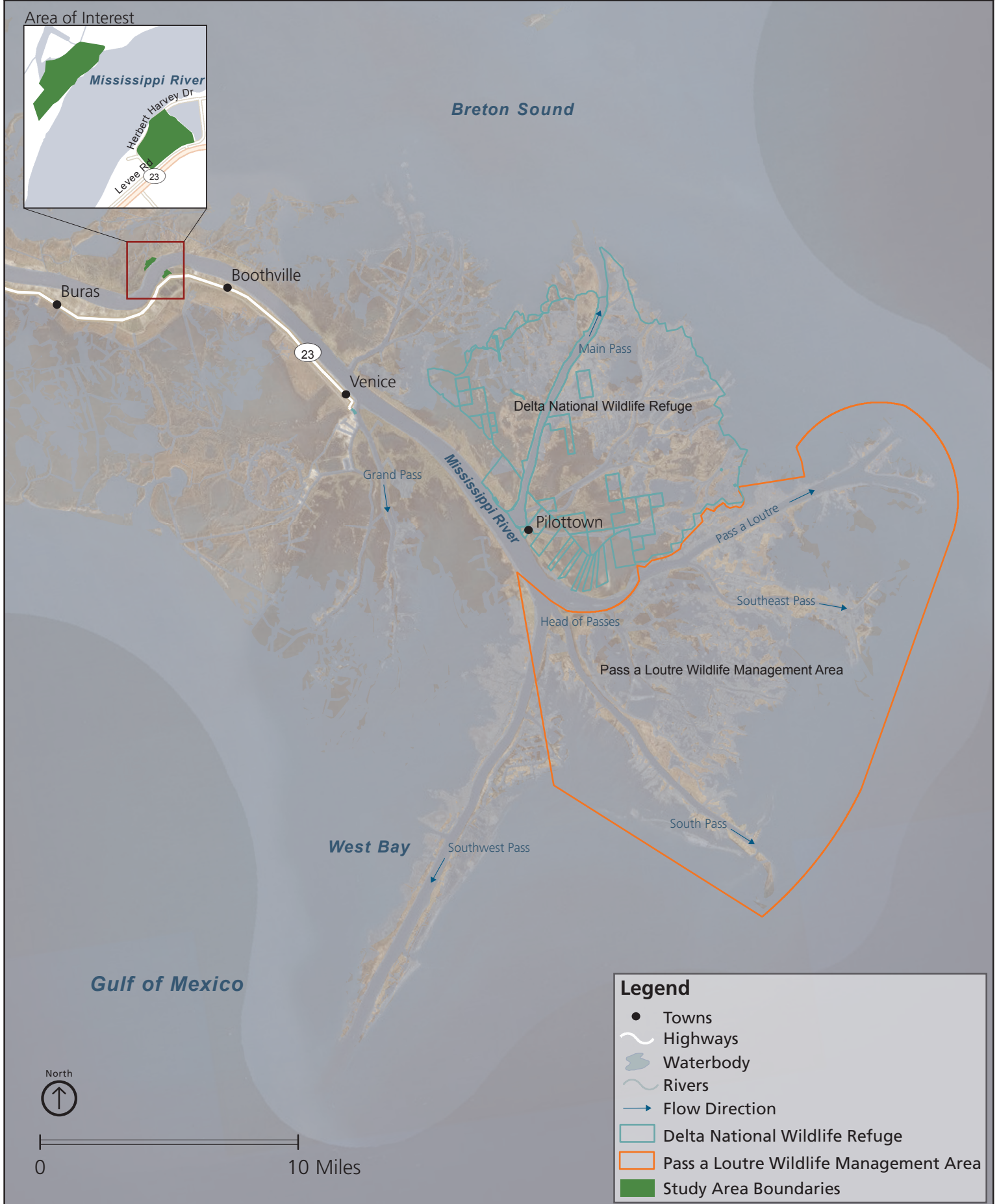
We look forward to hearing from you!

Lower Mississippi River Area

Special Resource Study

Louisiana

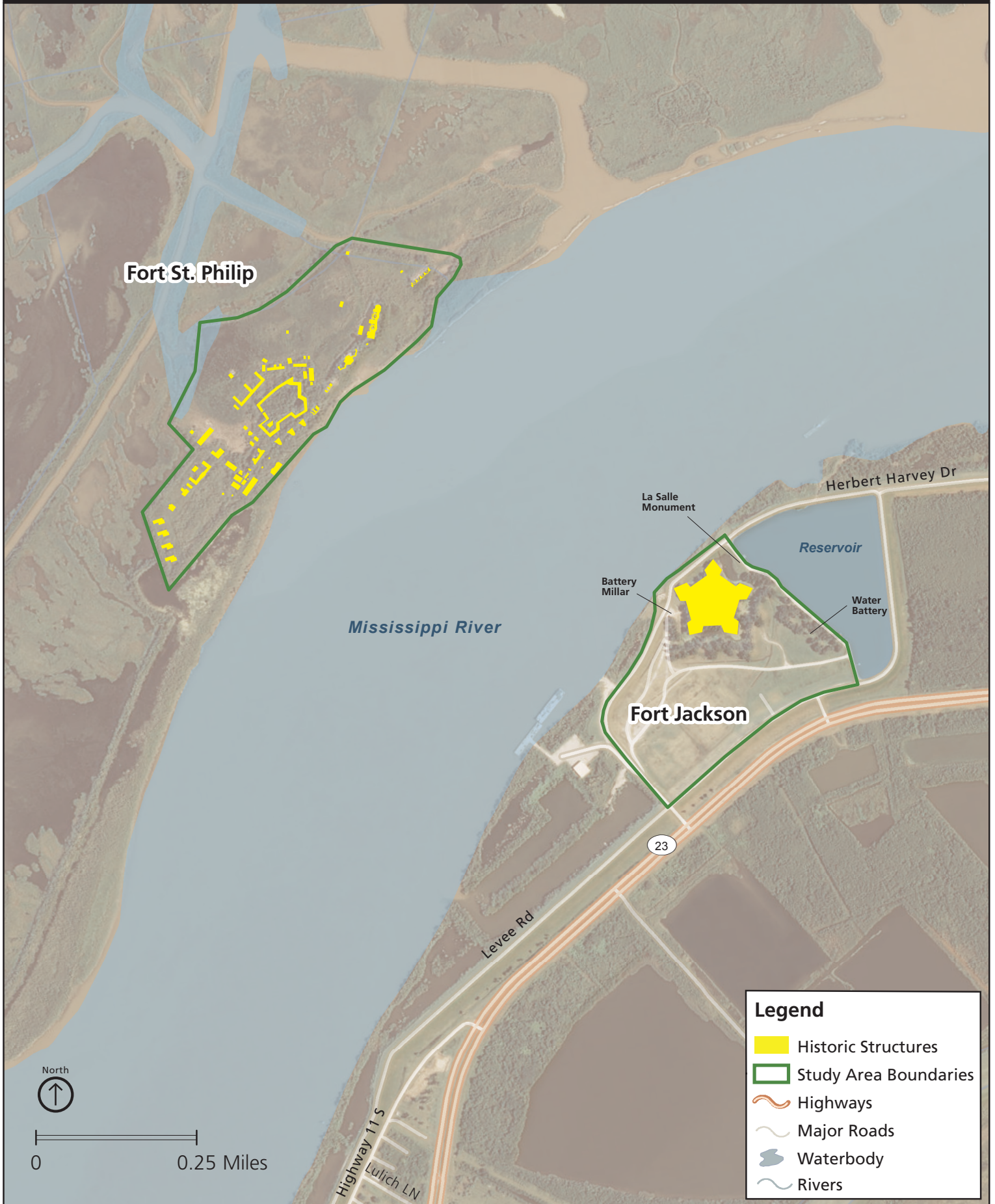
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Lower Mississippi River Area

Special Resource Study
Louisiana

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Overview of *Lower Mississippi Area*



Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson are located approximately 70 miles south of New Orleans, Louisiana, along a strategically important bend in the Mississippi River that today is known as the Plaquemines Bend. Both sites were designated as National Historic Landmarks in 1960, and played roles in battles ranging from the War of 1812 to the Civil War. Today, Fort Jackson is currently open to the public as a Plaquemines Parish park. Fort St. Philip is privately owned and accessible by boat only.

Fort St. Philip, the older of the two forts, was partly constructed by the French in 1746 and was later rebuilt by the Spanish in 1791. Repairs and improvements were carried out in 1814 during the War of 1812 under the direction of Andrew Jackson prior to the Battle of New Orleans. During this battle, the fort was successfully defended from bombardment by British naval forces and repelled the British fleet from joining their army at the Chalmette Battlefield and capturing New Orleans. Fort Jackson was constructed in 1822 directly across from Fort St Philip on the banks of the Mississippi River at the request of General (later President) Andrew Jackson.

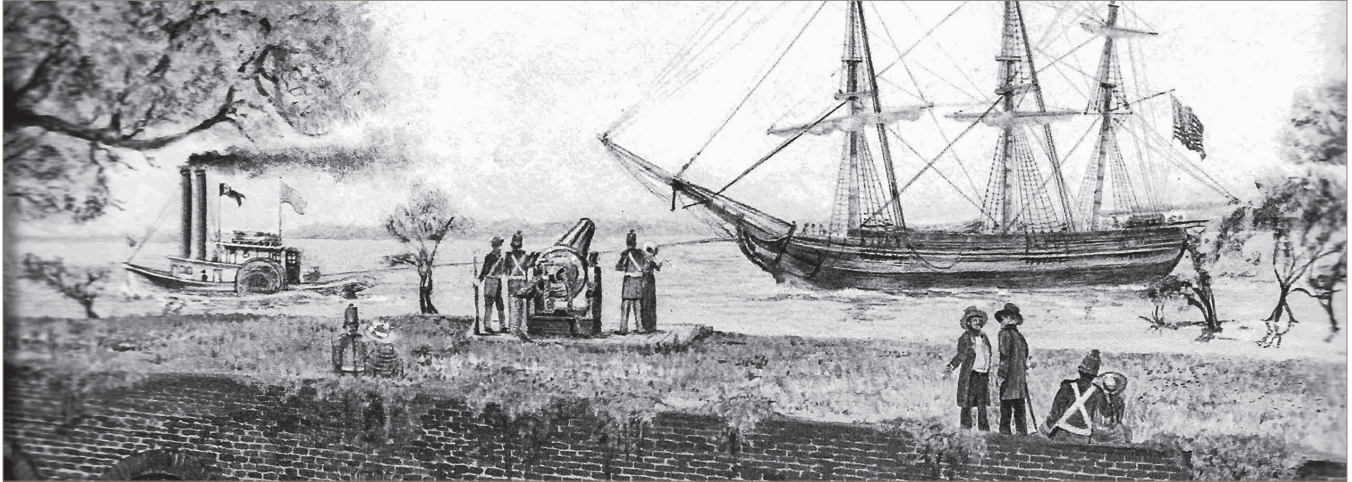
Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip saw little military action during the Civil War until commanding Confederate forces were besieged from

April 16-28 1862 by a Union Army fleet commanded by Flag-Officer David Farragut. Most of Union ships survived the battle while Confederate ships took heavy losses. On April 24th, Farragut successfully led most of his gunships past the forts, evading cannon fire, 2 ironclad ships, and other vessels/obstructions placed in the river by the Confederate defenders in what became known as the Civil War "Battle of the Forts" and often referred to as the "night the war was lost." The Union fleet then proceeded upriver to capture New Orleans. Other Union mortar schooners remained behind to continue the bombardment of the forts. The Confederate garrisons at Ft. Jackson and Ft. St. Philip surrendered on April 28th, and Union troops under the command of Gen. Benjamin Butler occupied New Orleans on May 1, 1862.

The Head of Passes today lies about 21 miles south of the forts where the Mississippi River splits into a delta to travel the last 20 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. During the American Civil War, Head of Passes was the site of several naval battles. The Anaconda Plan called for a large Union blockade of the Confederacy, and included plans to control the Mississippi River. This began in 1861 with a Union blockade stationed at the Head of Passes. This occupation resulted in the Battle of the Head of Passes, where the blockading forces were temporarily driven from the area. Ships involved in the ensuing conflict at the location include the CSS Manassas, the USS Vincennes, and the USS Richmond.

Today, the Mississippi River serves as a primary transportation corridor for large ships carrying cargo up and down river. A variety of recreation opportunities also occur within the Plaquemines Parish, most of which are concentrated in the Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) located about 12 miles to the south, and in a handful of state and local community parks that are also scattered throughout the area.

What is a *Special Resource Study?*



The National Park Service was created to conserve unimpaired outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational resources. The treasures in this system have been set aside by the American people to protect, preserve, and share our nation's greatest stories. Usually a new unit of the national park system is established by an act of Congress.

Before passing such legislation, Congress requires reliable information about the quality of resources in the area under consideration and the potential for visitor enjoyment and efficient management. The NPS collects this information and reports its findings to Congress through special resource studies. This process ensures that only those candidate sites that are most deserving of designation are included within the national park system.



SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY CRITERIA

The 1998 National Parks Omnibus Management Act (54 U.S. Code 100507) established the process for identifying and authorizing studies of new national park units. Under the law an area must meet all of the following criteria to be recommended as an addition to the national park system:

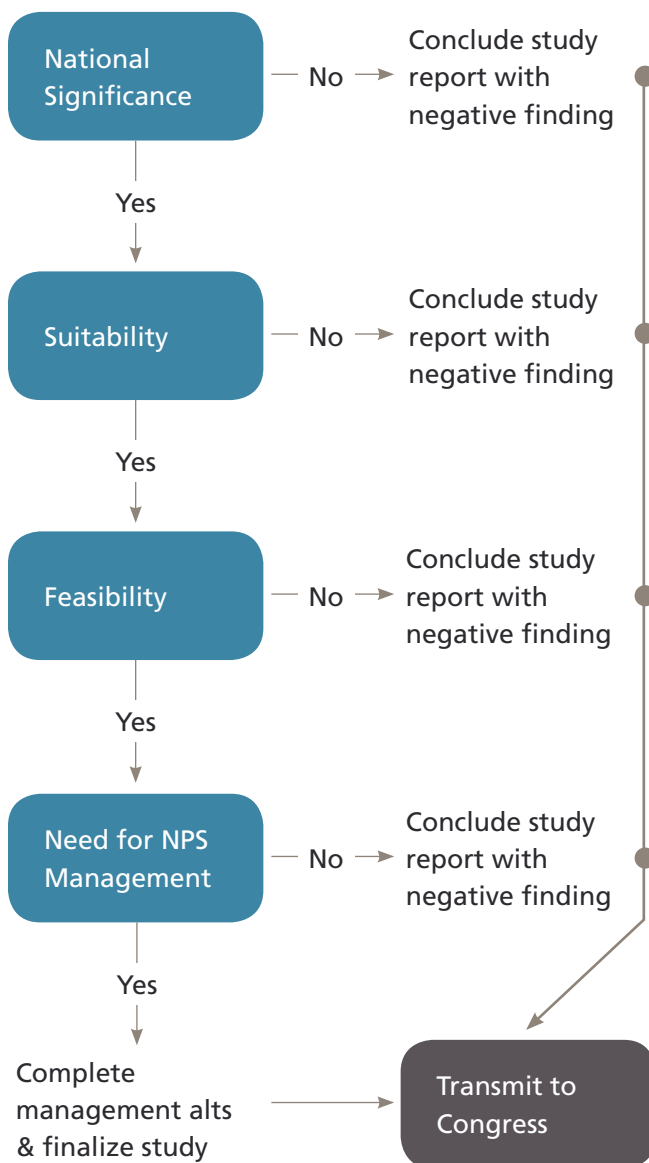
- Contain nationally significant natural and/or cultural resources.
- Represent a natural or cultural resource that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity.
- Must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and visitor enjoyment, and (2) capable of efficient administration by the NPS at a reasonable cost; important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, life cycle maintenance costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.
- Require direct NPS management that is clearly superior to other management approaches.

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY PROCESS

An NPS team has been assembled to prepare the Lower Mississippi Area Special Resource Study. This team will evaluate the two forts and associated and supporting sites in the area to determine if these meet the four study criteria previously outlined. If not, the study will conclude with a negative finding. If the area is found to meet all of the criteria, then the study team will carry the special

resource study through any necessary National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance (e.g. environmental assessment). Upon conclusion of the study process, the study findings would then be submitted to the NPS Director and the Secretary of the Interior, who in turn, would transmit the report and a recommendation to Congress. It would then be up to Congress to take action on legislation establishing a new unit of the national park system.

SRS COMPLETION PATHWAYS



WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS AND IDEAS ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- 1 *What are your general opinions about preserving the Fort Jackson, Fort St. Philip, and any related and supporting historical, cultural, or recreational resources located in Plaquemines Parish? (Please be as specific as possible)*
- 2 *What are your concerns about Fort Jackson, Fort St. Philip, and any related and supporting historical, cultural, or recreational resources? (Please be as specific as possible)*
- 3 *Please identify what lands you think should and should not be included in the study area and provide your rationale.*
- 4 *Please describe your suggestions for Fort Jackson, Fort St. Philip, and any related and supporting historical, cultural, or recreational resources may be managed.*
- 5 *Do you have any additional comments or ideas you would like to share?*



Please provide your responses online at:
http://parkplanning.nps.gov/LMIS_SRS
Or, comments may also be submitted through the mail to:

Lower Mississippi Special Resource Study Area
Attn: Scott Babcock
National Park Service – Denver Service Center
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
Lakewood, CO 80228

Comments received by July 6, 2016 will be most helpful in preparing the study. Thank you for your interest in the Lower Mississippi Area Special Resource Study.



OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

United States Department of the Interior
Attn: Scott Babcock
National Park Service – Denver Service Center
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
Lakewood, CO 80228

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
PERMIT NO. G-83