



Stabilization of the Railroad Redoubt Earthworks and Texas Memorial

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Public Scoping Newsletter | January 2017

Park History and Background

Vicksburg National Military Park (the park) was established on February 21, 1899, to protect areas associated with the siege and defense of Vicksburg, Mississippi, that pitted Union forces commanded by Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant against the defending Confederate forces commanded by Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton. With the capture of New Orleans by Union Admiral David Farragut and Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler on May 1, 1862, the heavily fortified Confederate position at Vicksburg posed the most significant remaining obstacle to Union control of the Mississippi River. The Union effort to take Vicksburg and neutralize its gun batteries began in May 1862 with a series of unsuccessful naval attacks led by Farragut and ended with Grant's climactic siege of the city and its ultimate surrender to Union forces on July 4, 1863.

The park currently consists of 1,806 acres and protects most of the historic siege and defense lines from the final

stage of the campaign. The entire battlefield area is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Also listed is the ironclad gunboat USS Cairo, the Shirley House—the only surviving antebellum structure in the park, and a number of major memorials and statues. There are 22 state memorials within park boundaries, of which 5 are state memorials on former park property and 1 is a state memorial on Grant's Canal. The park maintains a 16-mile tour road that allows visitors to experience the Union siege and Confederate defensive lines via 15 designated tour stops. Nearly 1,400 monuments and markers, including 284 regimental monuments, 239 regimental markers, 95 relief portraits, and 62 busts honoring key commanders from both sides lie along this route, while 645 iron tablets and guideposts mark trench lines, battery, and infantry positions, and describe battle events. The park also maintains other interpretive exhibits to help visitors understand the significance and historical context of the campaign. A map of the park boundary, tour road, and project area are provided in figure 1.



Figure 1. Park Map



Stabilization of the Railroad Redoubt Earthworks and Texas Memorial Environmental Assessment

Project Background

The Texas State Memorial is one of the 22 state memorials within the park's boundaries. It is located above an eroding bluff, adjacent to the Kansas City Southern rail line. The railroad redoubt was a Confederate earthen fortification built to protect the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, a vital entrance to the city. The fortification and the memorial are threatened by chronic erosion of the bluff, located just north of the two features (see figure 2).

The bluff face has been steadily lost through the years. The area's unique loess soils are particularly erodible whenever disturbed, and erosion in the project area is exasperated by tree fall along the bluff line. Park staff estimate an average loss of up to 6 inches of bluff face annually. The bluff line currently is between 15 and 17 feet from the historic fortification and the memorial. The erosion is now dangerously close to these historic structures, and park officials are concerned about the possibility of the earthwork and monument collapsing onto the railroad tracks.

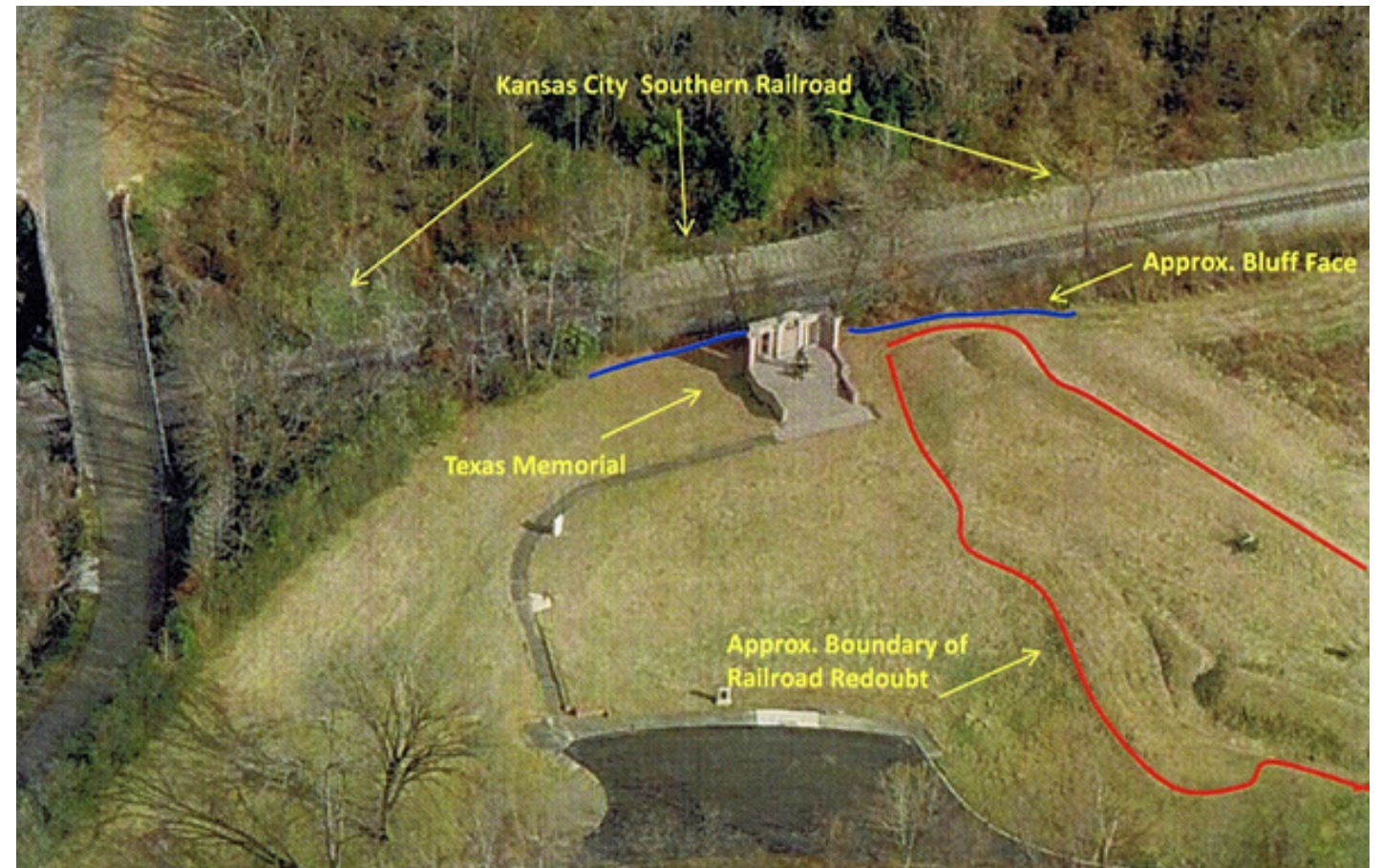


Figure 2. Project Area

Proposed Action, Purpose and Need

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to mitigate the continuing erosion and stabilize the site. The purpose of the project is to prevent further erosion and protect the memorial and fortification. The project is needed to prevent damage to the historic resources from further erosion, which could also affect visitor safety and the operation of the Kansas City Southern rail line adjacent to the project area. The project area is approximately 316 feet long and ranges from between 15 and 24 feet tall.

For more information about the project visit:
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/VICK>

NEPA Process

NPS must follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 to ensure it considers important environmental and cultural resources. The environmental impacts from a range of alternatives to stabilize the bluff will be analyzed during the NEPA process and evaluated in an environmental assessment (EA). Resources that may be affected by stabilization measures include cultural resources, visitor use and experience, health and safety, and special status species.

The document will analyze short- and long-term and cumulative effects of the proposed stabilization measures (action alternatives), along with a "no-action alternative." By comparing the proposed action alternatives with the no-action alternative and identifying mitigation measures that would minimize adverse effects, the EA will assist stakeholders in the decision-making process.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Vicksburg National Military Park
3201 Clay Street
Vicksburg, Mississippi 39183

Public Scoping Period

As part of the NEPA process, the proposed project will be evaluated in an EA, which will analyze the potential environmental effects of a range of alternatives. At this time, the Superintendent is announcing a 30-day public scoping period to solicit public comments on the proposed stabilization project. During this period, the public is invited to identify any issues or concerns they might have with the proposed project so that NPS can appropriately consider them in the EA. You may submit your comments electronically at the NPS's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/VICK>). If you are unable to access this website, please submit written comments to:

Superintendent
3201 Clay Street
Vicksburg, Mississippi 39183

Please submit comments by **February 23, 2017**.

Once the EA is developed, it will be made available for public review for a 30-day period. If you wish to be added to the park's mailing list, please be sure to indicate that in your response.

It is NPS practice to make all comments, including names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review. Individuals may request that NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, correspondents using the website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private". If submitting written comments, please state this request at the beginning of your comment. NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law.