

*Agency Official 106 Effect Report*

*Rehabilitation of Visitor Entrance to the Ellwood House Grounds and Cemetery Trail  
Wilderness Battlefield  
Spotsylvania County, Virginia*

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park  
120 Chatham Lane  
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22405**

## **Purpose**

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park was authorized by an act of Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091). The purpose of the park, as stated in the act, is “to commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church ... to survey, locate, and preserve the lines of the opposing armies in said battles, to open, construct, and repair such roads, highways, paths, and other approaches as may be necessary to make the historical points accessible to the public and to students of said battles ... and together also with such additional land as the Secretary of War may deem necessary for monuments, markers, tablets, roads, highways, paths, approaches, and to carry out the general purposes of this Act.” By Executive Order 6166 in 1933 the park was transferred to the Department of the Interior to be administered by the National Park Service.

Ellwood Manor, the plantation house on the Wilderness Battlefield, was constructed c1799 and served as a domestic site for nearly 200 years. In 1971, Ellwood Manor was sold to the National Park Service. The site serves as a primary public orientation and tour stop for park visitors.

## **Need**

Beginning in 1998, Ellwood Manor was opened to the public seasonally. The site is staffed by the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield (FoWB) annually between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Beginning in 2007, the interior of the building underwent extensive rehabilitation and both museum and interpretive exhibits were installed. In 2017, the public visitation to Ellwood was 6,503.

In 2010, the park completed a cultural landscape report (CLR) for Ellwood. The CLR’s Recommended Task 15 (page 177) encouraged the removal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cinder block garage once an alternative was found for storing the site’s maintenance tools and equipment. The nearby Brooder Barn was chosen for that purpose and in 2016 the garage was removed and the area returned to turf. The 20<sup>th</sup> century wood fence that at one time spanned the space between the garage and the nearby Farm Office still stands. It is the park’s plan to remove the fence, as it serves no purpose and presents an odd appearance now that the garage is gone. The park signs near the fence will be removed and shifted back towards the parking area. Archaeological testing at the new sign location has already occurred and no artifacts or resources were discovered at that location.

The Ellwood CLR Recommended Task 22 (page 179) suggests that the park make the pedestrian path to the Jones-Lacy cemetery universally accessible. As it exists now, the path leads south from the house along a gravel walk lined by non-contributing boxwood hedges and then descends into the south fields, where the path is maintained as mown turf, by a set of wood steps. The steps are not accessible to handicap visitors, which in turn makes the path not accessible. The park proposes to re-route the path from the house slightly to the west, thus taking advantage

of the contours of the land, which will result in a more accessible path. The new path will be maintained as mown turf. The gravel path and steps will be removed, seeded and returned to turf.

The Ellwood CLR Recommended Task 14 (page 177) suggests that the park remove the non-historic garden that sits along the existing cemetery path to the south of the house. In making this recommendation, the CLR states: “The boxwood hedge may be retained to provide visual interest and define the walk to the Ellwood cemetery.” While the park is not planning to remove the garden at this point, the proposed shifting of the cemetery trail negates the need to retain the boxwood hedges and the park proposes to remove them by cutting and grinding the stumps.

Overall, the above proposed changes will assist with traffic flow and accessibility issues.

## **Property Description**

A. Major Physical Components - Ellwood sits on a 97.14-acre tract on the Wilderness Battlefield. The tract is predominantly a mixture of open fields and gently rolling wooded plateaus, bisected by numerous streams and swamps. Most of the open fields are under cultivation. The house itself is opened to the public seasonally.

B. Architectural Significance – Ellwood Manor, the plantation house, was constructed c1799 and served as a domestic site for nearly 200 years. Two other buildings are located on the property, the 1934 stone Farm Office and the c.1950 Brooder Barn. Ellwood and the Farm Office are contributing to the park’s National Register listing and are also on the park’s List of Classified Structures – LCS #07951 and #82111. The Brooder Barn is not a contributing structure and is not listed on the LCS.

C. Historic Landscape Significance – In 2010, Ellwood was the subject of a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR). The Ellwood landscape is significant and contributes to the park’s National Register eligibility. That said, the CLR does identify the area behind (south) the Brooder Barn as an area for potential development to support park visitor services.

D. Archaeological Resources – Ellwood has been the subject of numerous archaeological surveys, the majority of which have focused on the area immediately inside the house grounds. More recently, a survey was conducted in the area to the rear (south) of the Brooder Barn. The survey also investigated a spot near the parking lot where orientation signs might be placed. The results of this survey are embodied in a report entitled *Phase I Archeological Survey in Support of the Ellwood Well and Drain Field Project, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Orange County, Virginia* (2018). The survey found no significant resources.

## **Description of Alternatives**

Alternative A – No Action

Under this alternative, the existing path to the cemetery will remain in place and continue to be an impediment to visitors with accessibility difficulties. Also, the fence will remain standing next to the site of the former garage, presenting an odd appearance to visitors approaching Ellwood from the parking area.

#### **Alternative B – Make Cemetery Path Accessible by Altering Contours**

Under this alternative, the existing path will remain in place, but at the point where steps have necessary to negotiate the drop in topography, the park would remove the stairs and alter the contours by cutting down the embankment to an accessible degree. This would alter the historic topography of the slope that borders the house yard and the south field. Additionally, the site has not been tested archaeologically and the excavation and removal of dirt could adversely affect unknown resources. The fence adjacent to the garage would be removed and the orientation signs moved closer to the parking area.

#### **Alternative C - Rehabilitation of Visitor Entrance to the Ellwood House Grounds and Cemetery Trail (Preferred Alternative)**

Under this alternative, the existing path from the house to the south field will be removed, as will the wood steps and the boxwood hedges that line the path. A path will be established slightly to the west, taking advantage of the contours of the yard and will connect with the existing mown path in the south field that leads to the cemetery. The new path will be maintained as mown turf. The fence that at one time connected to the garage will be removed. The orientation signs will be moved to a spot closer to the parking area.

### **Description of Mitigation Measures**

1. Archeological testing of the proposed location for the orientations signs took place and no significant resources were encountered. The results of the testing and survey can be found in *Phase I Archaeological Survey in Support of the Ellwood Well and Drain Field Project, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Orange County, Virginia* (2018).

### **Park Consultation**

The proposal is being circulated for comment to the park's Section-106 advisors for historic landscape architecture, and archaeology.

The proposal is going through a 30-day public comment and review period. During this time, the project is posted on the National Park Service Planning, Environmental, and Public Comment System (PEPC) website. The park has also contacted, and solicited comments from, representatives of interested organizations such as the University of Mary Washington's Department of Historic Preservation, Spotsylvania County, the Friends of the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields, the Friends of Wilderness Battlefield, Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe.

The proposal will be sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (Virginia Department of Historic Resources) for a 30-day review.

### **Effect Analysis**

The park's opinion is that Alternative C will have "no adverse effect" on significant historic resources.

### **Attachments**

1. Photographs
2. Maps

### **Report Prepared By**

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