

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECORD OF DECISION

for the

FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

and

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

for

SAGAMORE HILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Oyster Bay, New York

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to §102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Public Law 91-190, as amended, and the regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1505.2), the Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS) has prepared the following Record of Decision on the *Sagamore Hill NHS Final General Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FGMP/FEIS)*.

This document is a concise statement of the decisions that were made, the alternatives considered (including identification of the environmentally preferred alternative), the basis for the decision, and the mitigating measures developed in order to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. It also provides background information on the project and the public involvement process that was used to develop and refine the proposed plan and alternatives.

DECISION

The NPS will implement the agency's preferred alternative, Alternative 3--Past meets Present, as described and analyzed in the *Sagamore Hill NHS Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*.

The Draft GMP/EIS was made available for public review from January 8 through February 23, 2007. The comment period was extended to May 8, 2007 to allow sufficient time for public comment after the formal publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on March 8, 2007. The Final GMP/EIS was made available to the public for not less than 30 days on November 16, 2007. The 30 day No Action period ended on December 19, 2007.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Project Purpose

In 1962 Congress passed Public Law 87-547 establishing both Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site in New York City and Sagamore Hill National Historic Site in Oyster Bay, New York. The legislation authorized the National Park Service to accept the donation of the properties from the Theodore Roosevelt Association (TRA) along with a \$500,000 endowment to support the management and operation of the properties. The Theodore Roosevelt Association continues to play an advisory role in the management of the endowment and is among the park's primary partners.

A comprehensive management plan is needed for Sagamore Hill, because no such complete and formally approved plan exists. Since the park's establishment as a unit of the National Park System in 1962, the types of visitors and the way in which they experience the site have changed. A great deal more is now known about

how Theodore Roosevelt and his family lived, worked, and played at Sagamore Hill. The same is true of how this place was shaped by and reflected Roosevelt's personal philosophy on the American Ideal -- much of which is not yet adequately represented at the park.

The main function of a general management plan is to provide a clear definition of the park's purpose and management direction that will guide and coordinate all subsequent planning and management. The general management plan takes the long view: 15 to 20 years into the future. In accordance with federal law, all parks within the National Park System must operate under an approved general management plan. This ensures that park managers carry out, as effectively and efficiently as possible, the mission of the National Park Service, which states:

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The GMP describes and explains the resource conditions that should exist and the visitor experiences that should be available at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site. The plan is a policy-level document that provides guidance for park managers. It is not detailed, specific, or highly technical in nature. The GMP provides a consistent framework for coordinating and integrating all subsequent planning and management decisions concerning the park. All other park plans tier off of the GMP.

Public/Stakeholder Involvement

The National Park Service takes an interdisciplinary approach to planning. The planning team for Sagamore Hill National Historic Site was composed of individuals skilled in the areas of cultural resource management, history, historic preservation, education, interpretation, collection management, landscape architecture, archeology, and natural resource management. In addition to park staff and other NPS technical staff, the planning team also included representatives of the park's key partners, among which were the Theodore Roosevelt Association, the Friends of Sagamore Hill, and the park's volunteer corps.

A long-range interpretive planning workshop was held in March 2003. Forty participants representing the park, its partners, Roosevelt scholars, and other community interests gathered to discuss issues associated with visitor programming and services and the park's overall mission and goals.

Also in preparation for considering Sagamore Hill's future, a workshop on the commemorative nature of the park was led by Dr. Edward Linenthal, University of Wisconsin Professor of Religion & American Culture, in December 2003. The session involved several local Roosevelt and Long Island scholars as well as representatives of the park staff, the park volunteers, the Theodore Roosevelt Association, and the Friends of Sagamore Hill. The session offered an opportunity to consider the nature of commemoration itself and ways to highlight the 21st century relevance of Theodore Roosevelt.

The official public start of the planning process was the opening of the new Theodore Roosevelt history exhibit at Old Orchard in January 2004. The preparation of the general management plan was formally announced, and a brochure describing the planning process was distributed to attendees.

To acquaint the community and interested citizens with the National Park Service planning process, to solicit comments or concerns regarding the future of Sagamore Hill, and to report on the status of planning, the planning team held two public scoping sessions in April 2004. One session was held in Oyster Bay, and the other in New York City at Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site. The Oyster Bay meeting was well-attended, attracting nearly 40 local participants. At the sessions, the team members reviewed the purpose and significance statements and preliminary park themes. Meeting participants were also invited to comment

upon the park's planning issues and share their thoughts on the park's future. Comments were recorded on flipcharts and comment cards.

In June 2004, representatives of the park's staff and its partners participated in a number of comparative site visits. The purpose of the site visits was to consider how other sites with similar characteristics handled different aspects of site management and visitor services. In determining the sites to visit, particular emphasis was placed on historic period, the character and composition of the resource base, the presence of partnerships, and the site's relationship to its host community. The sites selected were:

- The Mark Twain House and Museum,
Hartford, Connecticut
- Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park,
Woodstock, Vermont
- Saint Gaudens National Historic Site,
Cornish, New Hampshire
- Weir Farm National Historic Site,
Wilton, Connecticut

During these visits, the planning team observed the practical application of a number of ideas being explored at Sagamore Hill, including the adaptive re-use of existing buildings, better integrating the cultural landscape into the visitor experience, and making important figures in American history relevant to contemporary audiences.

The plan's first formal newsletter – Foundation for Planning – was printed and distributed in October 2004. The newsletter reviewed the planning process and key planning issues as well as Sagamore Hill's purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and preliminary goals. The newsletter was mailed to the park's mailing list (approximately 630 addresses at the time) and posted on the park's website. The newsletter was well-received and resulted in formal comments from 18 respondents.

Also in October 2004, the park's superintendent presented preliminary management concepts to the Theodore Roosevelt Association's Board of Trustees at its annual meeting in Portland, Oregon. Posters depicting the Sagamore Hill preliminary management concepts were prominently displayed in the conference hotel's lobby. NPS staff were posted at the display and were available to take comments and answer questions from the TRA general membership.

In November 2004, the preliminary management concepts were presented to the board of the Friends of Sagamore Hill and representatives of Sagamore Hill's Volunteers in the Park (VIPs). During the winter of 2005, additional briefings were held for the Oyster Bay Main Street Association, the Oyster Bay Town Supervisor, and again for the park's volunteers.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was initiated in January 2005 with regards to the status of threatened and endangered species in the area. According to USFWS, except for occasional transient individual animals, no federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species under USFWS jurisdiction are known to be present in the project impact area. In addition, no habitat in the project impact area is currently designated or proposed "critical habitat" in accordance with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 USC 1531 et seq.). NPS found that there was no effect on any federally-listed species. The USFWS is responsible for the management of the Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge that abuts Sagamore Hill National Historic Site. The planning team has been consulting with USFWS staff from the Long Island Complex, the administrative unit responsible for managing the Oyster Bay NWR. USFWS staff participated in a round-table discussion of natural resource management at Sagamore Hill in December 2004.

Consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Office was initiated in January 2005. Likewise, letters regarding the initiation of the planning process were also sent to Native American tribes historically associated with this area of Nassau County. The tribes contacted included the Stockbridge-Munsee Community of Wisconsin, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, and the Delaware Nation. In each case, contact was made with the tribal leader and, whenever possible, with the tribal historic preservation officer. In February 2007, SHPO-NY responded to the Draft EIS in writing indicating that they had "no formal comments at this time." Among the tribes consulted, only the Delaware Tribe responded to the Draft EIS with a letter indicating no comment.

In April 2005 a second newsletter describing four preliminary alternatives was distributed to the planning mailing list and made available on the park's website. The preliminary alternatives newsletter went out to approximately 800 addressees. Following the distribution of the newsletter in April, two major consultation meetings were held. For one meeting, over 100 park neighbors from Cove Neck were invited to Sagamore Hill to discuss the preliminary alternatives. Approximately 14 park neighbors attended, including the mayor of the village of Cove Neck. During this session, park neighbors expressed particular concern about a proposal to develop a visitor use facility and associated parking across Sagamore Hill Road from the Theodore Roosevelt Home.

A second public meeting in April 2005 was cosponsored by the Oyster Bay Main Street Association. As part of a larger agenda, Sagamore Hill's superintendent presented a program describing the preliminary alternatives to an audience of over 100 people. Questions were addressed, but comments were reserved for an open house following the formal presentations, during which NPS staff accepted approximately 20 comments. The preliminary alternatives newsletter and associated public meetings generated 23 additional sets of formal comments arriving by phone, electronic mail, and letter.

In May 2005, Sagamore Hill's core planning team met to identify the preferred alternative. For each alternative, the planning team considered the potential to address park goals, the possible benefits and impacts, the preliminary capital costs, and the relevant external influences (e.g. community support). Based on this analysis, the planning team recommended that the Northeast Regional Director identify *Alternative 3: Past Meets Present* as the National Park Service's preferred alternative. In a subsequent meeting, the Regional Director concurred with this recommendation.

In October 2005, Sagamore Hill's superintendent presented the National Park Service's preferred alternative to the Theodore Roosevelt Association general membership at its 2005 annual meeting in Washington, DC. Approximately 60 members attended the session. There were few questions or comments at the time.

The draft general management plan/draft environmental impact statement was made available for public review from January 8 through February 23, 2007. The comment period was extended to May 8, 2007 to allow sufficient time for public comment after the formal publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on March 8, 2007.

On March 27, 2007, an error was noted in *Part Four: Environmental Consequences*. A word processing-related technical problem resulted in printed text that was jumbled and unclear. A postcard describing the error and noting the availability of corrected text was mailed to every recipient on the mailing list for the draft document. A note was also made on the project web page on the National Park Service's Planning, Environmental Compliance, and Public Comment (PEPC) website along with the corrected electronic version of Part Four. This error has been corrected in the final document.

A public open house was held in Oyster Bay to solicit public comments early in February 2007. Approximately 23 people were present at the open house. Twenty-seven sets of written comments were received by the

planning team. The planning team carefully reviewed the comments received and developed responses to all substantive comments in the Final GMP/EIS.

In August 2007, the Department of Interior prepared a consistency determination in accordance with 15 CFR Part 930 Subpart C. The Department of the Interior determined that the plan and the means for its implementation would be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the New York Coastal Management Plan. The consistency determination was submitted to the New York Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources. In August 2007, the NY Department of State indicated their concurrence with this determination in writing.

The Final GMP/EIS was made available to the public for not less than 30 days on November 16, 2007. The 30 day No Action period ended on December 19, 2007.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Two action alternatives and a “No Action Alternative” were analyzed in the *Sagamore Hill Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS). The action alternatives analyzed in the EIS were developed and refined through a four-year public planning and environmental review process and include: the preferred alternative – Alternative 3: Past meets Present, and Alternative 2: Building Capacity. Each alternative is summarized below.

Under the preferred alternative -- *Alternative 3: Past Meets Present*, visitors to Sagamore Hill would be offered an experience that combines the opportunity to explore the site’s contemporary relevance in the same context in which one explores its history. However, under this alternative, greater emphasis is placed on rehabilitation of the cultural landscape and historic structures. As in Alternative 2, people would begin their tour at a visitor orientation facility located in the historic core – in this case, the New Barn would be expanded and rehabilitated to provide visitor services. The existing visitor contact station – a mid-20th century structure – would be removed to make way for the rehabilitation of a portion of the historic farm yard. An addition to Old Orchard would be constructed to provide appropriate climate-controlled storage for the park’s collections as well as a large education and program space. The Old Orchard garage (current maintenance facility) would be rehabilitated for use as staff housing. As proposed under both Alternatives 1 and 2, the park would continue to pursue the development of a new maintenance facility that would be constructed on park property.

Alternative 2 – Building Capacity is geared toward building the park’s capacity to address its basic visitor services and operational needs. A visitor orientation facility would be established within the historic core. In this scenario, the New Barn would be modestly expanded and used to accommodate basic orientation and visitor services. The exterior of the New Barn would be rehabilitated to its appearance during Roosevelt family’s residence. The existing visitor contact station would be improved and would continue to house the bookstore and upgraded restrooms. Selected features of Sagamore Hill’s cultural landscape and much of its historic architecture would be rehabilitated to reflect the period of the Roosevelt family’s residence in support of specific interpretive objectives. A new collection storage facility would be constructed in combination with the proposed new maintenance facility and would be located on the site of the Gray Cottage garage. The new collection storage facility would also include dedicated research space as well as NPS staff offices. The garage at Old Orchard would be converted from its current use as maintenance facility and rehabilitated for use as program space.

Under *Alternative 1—Status Quo (No Action)*, Sagamore Hill would continue to be managed in accordance with current management direction and ongoing programs. This approach would allow for limited incremental actions to enhance park management but would not result in any major change to the park’s current management practices. The status quo alternative serves as the baseline for evaluating and comparing the other alternatives.

BASIS FOR DECISION

The Draft GMP/EIS for Sagamore Hill was developed over a 4 year period with meaningful public input. Factors considered in developing the alternatives and identifying a selected action include:

- the degree to which the park's purpose, significance, and goals could be met;
- the degree to which the identified planning issues could be resolved;
- the degree to which necessary implementation actions could occur while mitigating/minimizing the associated environmental impacts; and
- the degree to which it could be feasible to implement an alternative taking into account costs, staffing and operational requirements, compliance requirements, and the needed support/cooperation of others.

The selected action for the Final GMP is a refined version of Alternative 3, which was presented as the preferred alternative in the Draft GMP/EIS. The Draft GMP/EIS was released in January 2007. Subsequently, slight modifications to the preferred alternative were made in response to comments made during the public review period. The refined preferred alternative was presented in the Final GMP/EIS, published in November 2007, and is the subject of this Record of Decision. The selected alternative best supports the park's purpose, significance and goals, while also providing management direction that best protects resources and offers high-quality visitor experiences.

Alternative 1: *Status Quo* (No Action) alternative, would not:

- fully support the park's purpose, significance and goals – there would be numerous deficiencies with respect to improving resource management and enhancing the visitor experience, particularly in interpretation of the site's cultural landscape;
- address planning issues associated with the identified needs for cultural resource management particularly concerning collections storage, the best and most appropriate use of historic structures, and the treatment of the cultural landscape; enhancing interpretive opportunities particularly addressing the need for appropriate program and education space; improving operational efficiencies; and expanding and improving upon links to other Theodore Roosevelt related sites; and
- mitigate or minimize environmental impacts associated with the park's current operational and management direction.

Alternative 2: *Building Capacity* would not:

- address planning issues associated with the identified needs for cultural resource management particularly concerning the treatment of the cultural landscape; and
- improve operational efficiency as a result of creating a 2-structure visitor facility complex;

In sum, the overall benefits of the selected alternative include:

- Appropriate space to effectively orient visitors, stage tours for large groups, and provide on-site programs in a single location;
- Climate controlled collections storage co-located with Old Orchard Museum;
- Changing exhibit space;
- Additional large education and program space to support a greater variety of programming and services to schools and other organized groups;
- Expanded pathway system to allow for improved public access to and interpretation of the cultural landscape;
- Expanded programming links to Oyster Bay hamlet and other Theodore Roosevelt-related sites.

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS AND ADDRESS PUBLIC CONCERNS

The environmental consequences of the selected action and the other alternatives were fully documented in the draft GMP/EIS and the Final GMP/EIS. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm that could result from the implementation of the selected action have been identified and incorporated as described in the Final GMP/EIS. The park will continue to consult with adjoining neighbors and community representatives as it pursues implementation of the plan. Due to the programmatic nature of the plan and as it is implemented over time, development projects will be reviewed as necessary for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other applicable laws and regulations as soon as possible prior to project implementation. Actions to minimize impacts include using already disturbed areas as much as possible where development is planned, avoiding sensitive resources, using sustainable design techniques, mitigating resource damage through careful implementation planning, phasing, timing, and other related actions.

The public review period for the Draft GMP/EIS ended on May 8, 2007. A number of substantive comments were addressed in the final plan. Public comment on the Draft GMP/EIS and NPS response is included in Part Six of the Final GMP/EIS. Most comments were favorable and supported the selected action. The revised plan places a greater emphasis on consultation with the adjoining neighbors relative to the rehabilitation of the cultural landscape. The revised plan also omits the proposal calling for the removal of a portion of the Old Orchard Service Road north of the existing parking area in order to rehabilitate a portion of the cultural landscape.

The no-action period on the Final GMP/EIS ended on December 19, 2007, thirty (30) days after the publication of a notice of availability in the Federal Register.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferable alternative is defined as "...the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA's Section 101. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources" (*Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) National Environmental Policy Act Regulations*).

The National Park Service has identified Alternative 3 as its preferred alternative which is also the environmentally preferable alternative. This alternative calls for substantial additions to both the New Barn and Old Orchard, both of which are historic structures considered to be contributing features on the historic property. The alteration of these buildings would be undertaken in a sensitive manner that minimizes their impact on the site. The scale of these proposed additions is offset in several ways. Mitigating issues would be addressed through the pre-planning and design processes for each of these facilities. The rehabilitated buildings would enable the park to meet both its resource management and visitor services needs (e.g. climate-controlled collections storage) and would allow for the removal of the existing visitor contact station which, in turn, would permit the rehabilitation of this highly visible portion of the historic farmyard.

Overall, this alternative emphasizes rehabilitation of a substantial portion of the cultural landscape and of historic structures, recognizes the value of the park's natural resources, enhances management of these natural resources, and limits new development to previously disturbed sites to the greatest degree possible. Buildings and features that are considered intrusions on the landscape—such as the non-historic building that houses the existing visitor contact station—would be removed to make way for the rehabilitation of the historic farm yard

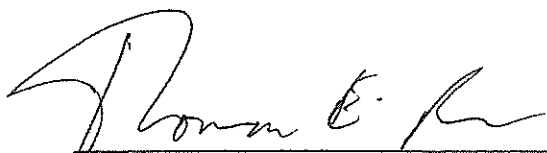
and gardens. The park would also retain much of the existing field/forest configuration, ensuring that the diversity of habitat types is maintained.

Expanding the park's system of pathways and visitor facilities would enable visitor services staff to better manage visitation and distribute use across several venues. It also would offer the visiting public opportunities to explore the park without overtaxing its resources.

CONCLUSION: The above factors and considerations justify selection of the preferred action as described in the Final General Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement for Sagamore Hill National Historic Site.

The NPS will continue to work with local, state and other federal officials, the general public, the private sector, and the Congress of the United States to implement the plan.

Recommended by:



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3/18/08

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MAR 27 2008

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