

Chapter Seven: Public Involvement, Consultation, and Coordination

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Solicitation of public comment on Special Resource Studies is required by NPS policy. More importantly however, public input helps the National Park Service shape and improve its preliminary ideas to better meet the mission of the Park Service, the goals of NEPA, and the interests of the American public.

This chapter describes the public involvement program employed during this project and documents the role public participation played in identifying and refining the management alternatives included in this report.

AGENCY AND PUBLIC SCOPING ACTIVITIES

Internal scoping with representatives of the city of Waco and Baylor University was conducted during July 19–20, 2005. The primary objective was to meet with current landowners and principal players who have been actively involved in the protection and preservation of the site. This enabled the study team to gain a better understanding of site conditions, history of excavations activities, stakeholders, issues, and informational sources. Additional topics of discussions included reviewing the SRS process, the study schedule, and strategies for public involvement.

A web page was established on the National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website that introduced the special resource study initiative, including information on the study process and schedule, and invited members of the public to participate in the process.

The team prepared handout materials for initial agency and public contacts including a brochure with a mail back card for listing contact information for the purpose of engaging interested members of the public.

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is the nearest NPS unit to the study area and they have graciously provided logistical support to the special resource study team as well as preparing the initial mailing list for the study.

On October 14, 2005, Congressman Chet Edwards conducted a press conference announcing the start of the special resource study; Texas State Coordinator and former Superintendent of Lyndon B. Johnson Historical Park David Vela represented the National Park Service.

On October 18, 2005, Lyndon B. Johnson Historical Park issued a press release announcing the start of the study.

On October 25, 2005, the study team met with representatives of the Texas Historical Commission, (the umbrella agency for the State Historic Preservation Office). Attending the meeting included Mark H. Denton, Director, State & Federal Review Section, Archeology Division, Dr. James Bruseth, Director, Archeology Division, and Dr. Ernest Lundelius, Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin. Mr. Denton noted that an archeological investigation was previously conducted within the excavation area of the site. The archeologist did not find any signs of human interaction with the mammoth herd. The State Historic Preservation Officer is supportive of the study and the possibility of the site becoming a unit of the national park system; however, with this general level of

planning, the state does not see a need to enter into 106 consultations concerning the special resource study. They would prefer to revisit the 106 consultation during future undertakings such as additional archeological surveys at the site or during implementation activities for park development.

On October 27, 2005, Baylor University hosted a series of four public and agency scoping meetings throughout the day, providing a forum for the NPS study team to meet with the original donors, local government managers, affiliated groups, agencies, the general public, and local community leaders. It also provided the opportunity for public discussion of their visions and concerns for the resource, as well as providing the study team an opportunity to provide an overview of the study process and schedule.



October 27, 2005 public meeting in Baylor University Mayborn Museum Complex's SBC Auditorium.

The evening program almost filled Baylor University's SBC auditorium (200 seat capacity). The meetings were covered by the local newspaper and television stations. Contact cards were distributed to attendees at each session to help grow the mailing list. A total of 171 cards were collected that day.

A newsletter introducing the study process, schedule, as well as a summary of the issues identified by the public during the October public scoping meetings was distributed in March 2006. We received 48 responses from individuals providing comments. An

additional 46 individuals requested to be included on the mailing list.

Common threads of concern focused on the following primary themes: provide visitor access to the site, utilize the research and educational potential of the site, and balance resource protection with these activities. A summary of the public input collected is more fully described under chapter four.

During the preparation of this plan, NPS staff coordinated informally with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Austin, Texas, field office. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service responded in December 2005 with a list of threatened and endangered species for McLennan County. The Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife (TPW) forwarded a list of state candidate, proposed, and listed threatened and endangered species for McLennan County in February 2006.

On April 11 –12, 2006, the study team met with representatives of Baylor University and the city of Waco to discuss the city's progress with the Save America's Treasures initiative, provide an update on the study team's progress with significance, suitability, and feasibility, review fundamental purpose framework of NPS units, develop "working" purpose statement for the Waco Mammoth Site, discuss the current Waco/Baylor management agreement, explore potential roles in management alternatives, and to provide a briefing of the study purpose and progress for a fundraising luncheon hosted by the city for the purpose of generating additional donations to match the Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service.

On December 7, 2006, an interim report detailing the resource evaluation and study team's initial findings for the significance, suitability, and feasibility of the Waco Mammoth Site was submitted to NPS leadership for consideration and review. A number of internal meetings and presentations were conducted between the study team

and NPS colleagues, which culminated in an approval from NPS leadership to proceed with the evaluation of the fourth criteria, which considers management options.

Drawing from the body of stakeholder and public input, the study team developed a range of management alternatives and tested their viability with current managers of the resource within the city of Waco and Baylor University and then NPS leadership. Differences among alternatives related primarily as to who would manage the area and the approach or method to which the site's purpose would be achieved. Four potential management alternatives evolved and were outlined in a newsletter that was distributed for public review and comment during September through October 2007.

A written invitation to participate in the special resource study along with copies of the scoping summary and preliminary alternatives newsletters were sent October 4, 2007, to Mr. Gary McAdams, president of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes in Oklahoma, of which the Waco Tribe is one of the affiliated tribes. The letter was seeking to inquire if he or other members of the tribal government would like to consult about the special resource study for the Waco Mammoth Site and any possible traditional uses associated with the site. There has been no response to date.

Meetings with representatives of the city of Waco, Baylor University, and the Waco Mammoth Foundation were conducted on September 19, 2007, to discuss the management options under consideration by the National Park Service. Baylor University scheduled a media event at the Waco Mammoth Site to encourage a broader coverage of the special resource study, community initiatives for protecting the site, and to encourage public participation in the study.

Over 90 written responses were received by mail and via the NPS planning website. Almost all of the public comments indicated that the alternatives presented in the newsletter represented a reasonable range of options to further develop and analyze in the special resource study. A majority of the public responses expressed support for expanding the existing partnership between Baylor University and the city of Waco to include the National Park Service so that the strength of each organization can focus on the stewardship of this special resource.

The current mailing list includes over 400 names, consisting of members of governmental agencies, organizations, businesses, legislators, local governments, and interested citizens.

