

A Vision For The Future

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your recent responses to Newsletter #1 and comments at the public meetings held in January to provide input for draft alternatives for the future management of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The planning team received hundreds of comments useful in formulating the principle issues the General Management Plan (GMP) is to address. Public comments are summarized in this newsletter.

The GMP planning team, composed of park staff and planning professionals from the National Park Service planning office in Denver, has taken the public input and developed draft management alternatives presented in this newsletter. These alternatives are "concepts" that describe different ways the park could be managed in the future consistent with the laws, rules and regulations governing the park. The first of these alternatives is referred to as the No (Future) Action Alternative and describes how the park is managed now. This alternative is used as the baseline for comparing future changes to the park proposed in two additional alternatives. These alternatives present differing opportunities for people to experience the park and ways to manage the park's resources in the future.

The draft GMP is tentatively scheduled for public review in July 2005 and will present the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences throughout the park. When finalized, it will become the park's roadmap for planning and development for the next 20 years.

It is important that everyone interested in the park's future stay involved throughout the planning process, as the alternatives are refined by your comments and those of planning professionals. Together, we will ensure that Harpers Ferry National Historical Park remains a treasured place, unimpaired for the enjoyment of this and future generations.

Sincerely,

Donald Campbell
Superintendent

What We Heard From You

We received a strong response to our initial scoping. Almost 300 responses were recorded from the mail-in card, letters, e-mail and public meetings. We have analyzed these comments and present the following summary.

VALUES

Most of the commenters who described a value stated the history and significance of the park. Second most common mentioned was the value of scenery and natural beauty, followed by the ongoing preservation of the historic setting and other resources.

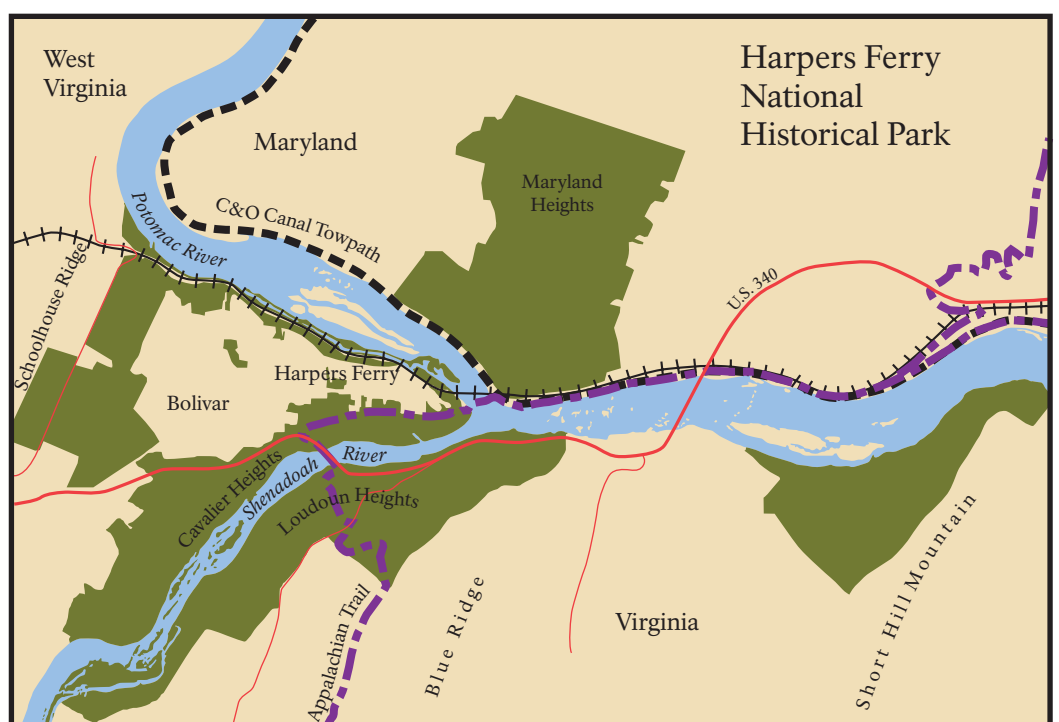
ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

Your comments told us that the most important issue that park management should address is the threat from outside development encroaching on the park. Another important priority we were asked to consider was park boundary adjustments, in particular, expanding the boundary to protect additional Civil War sites. Other priorities mentioned included cooperation with local communities, more or better access to park sites, protect park resources, and more interpretation of Civil War sites.

WHO COMMENTED

Nearly half of the comments we received were from individuals residing in West Virginia. Individuals residing in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania provided an equal amount of comments. The remaining comments were received from individuals throughout the nation.

Throughout our planning effort, the National Park Service is committed to involving the public, including park visitors, neighbors, partners, businesses, and local government. Suggestions we received from you have been incorporated into the alternative concepts.



Alternatives Descriptions

Alternative 1 (No Action)

Under the No Action alternative, the park would continue the park management strategies and practices now in place. Management would continue to follow the intent and spirit of the 1980 Development Concept Plan, the last parkwide plan. There would be no change in facilities beyond regular maintenance and projects already underway. It would be likely that visitors would not notice any changes in appearance or operations of the park since management would maintain existing visitor experiences and preserve the park's cultural, natural, and scenic values. No Action does not imply or direct the discontinuation of any existing programs or services. This alternative is included to form a baseline for comparison in the General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

Alternative 2

The intent of this alternative is to present the park as a series of historical vignettes or windows. Each site within the park would reflect the era of its most significant period or event. Management activities would focus on the preservation of the resources as well as the presentation of the interpretive themes appropriate to that window. Outlying natural areas would be actively managed to maintain natural processes. Line-of-fire clearings could be opened and maintained at the site of important military emplacements.

A more user-friendly park transportation system would be developed to shuttle visitors from the Visitors Center to park sites they wish to visit. Park staff would work with the community to seek parking and traffic circulation solutions that enhance the visitor experience while respecting the needs of downtown businesses. A round-the-park trail would be developed.

Presenting the historic atmosphere and vitality of a living 19th century community in Lower Town would be accomplished through restored structures, period shops, and costumed personnel.

The Civil War battlefield sites (Bolivar Heights, Jackson's Flanks, etc.) would be maintained to represent the landscape of 1862. Occasional ranger-led interpretive walks or demonstrations would be held. There would be increased focus on preservation and interpretation of earthworks throughout the park. The remains of a former campground would be removed and the contour of the battlefield restored.

Management focus on Camp Hill would be to preserve and use the structures while increasing visitation to, and understanding of, Camp Hill and Storer College.

The Nash Farm would be maintained as a mid-20th century farmscape and house an NPS environmental education and interpretation center with outdoor laboratory.

Cavalier Heights would become more of a central location for visitor orientation and information, transportation, and special events with an expanded visitor center, amphitheater, and new maintenance facility.

Alternative 3

This alternative would provide an increased connection with businesses and public/private organizations to provide enhanced visitor services and improved maintenance. This would be accomplished through increased use of non-NPS business partners. Resources would be maintained and preserved for the benefit of the visiting public and to accommodate non-NPS partners. Visitors would be offered a greater diversity of experiences and programs, some of which could be provided by fee-based commercial enterprises. Some structures, facilities, and agricultural land would be leased to non-NPS entities to ensure their maintenance and to lessen the financial burden on the park.

Outlying natural areas would be actively managed to maintain or enhance natural resource values. In some areas, historic viewsheds would be opened and maintained. Scientific research by outside agencies or institutions would be encouraged.

In this alternative, the transportation system would be expanded to incorporate stops at Camp Hill in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar Heights through partnerships with the towns. Park management would approach Amtrak and MARC to encourage scheduling excursion trains from Washington, DC to the park. A round-the-park trail would be developed with connections to regional trails.

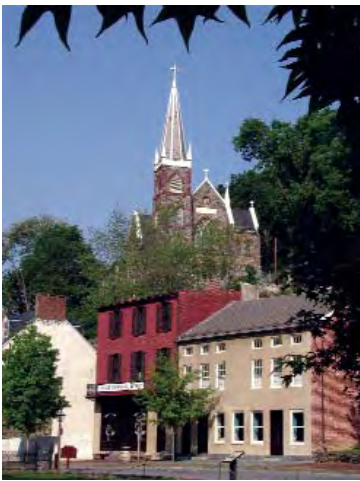
To enhance the visitor experience in Lower Town, partnerships with businesses would be made to open stores appropriate to the time period and provide a larger variety of interpretive activities. Park staff would work with the community to seek innovative parking and traffic circulation solutions. Historic structures throughout the park would be stabilized and interpreted.

The Civil War sites (Bolivar Heights, Jackson's Flanks, etc.) would be maintained to represent battlefield landscapes. Interpretive walks or demonstrations would be held. Occasional military living history programs by partners would be allowed. Some existing campground facilities would be renovated for use as group campsite.

Structures on Camp Hill would be available for historic leasing, similar to Lower Town. Visitors would find increased access to, and information on, Camp Hill and Storer College.

The Nash Farm would be maintained as a mid-20th century farmscape. The NPS would seek an independent educational institute to operate an environmental education and interpretation center.

Facilities at Cavalier Heights would become a primary source for park and regional information, transportation, and a venue for special events with an expanded jointly-managed visitor center and amphitheater.



Management Zones

As part of this phase of the GMP process, the planning team zoned the park into seven distinct management zones articulating for each zone a Management prescription that describes the desired resource conditions and/or visitor experience. Management prescriptions guide the preservation of resources, their interpretation, and what types of facilities might be appropriate for each zone. The Management prescriptions help guide the development of the draft Alternatives presented on the adjacent page.



Scenic / Natural Preservation Zone

The primary purpose of this zone is to protect and preserve natural and cultural resources and maintain the scenic viewsheds as seen from key locations within the park. Appropriate forms of recreation such as hiking, fishing, and nature watching would continue to be allowed. Opportunities for solitude and natural soundscapes would be prevalent. This zone would be applied in the outlying portions of the park such as Short Hill and Loudoun Heights.



Cultural Landscape Zone

The primary purpose of this zone is to present the historic appearance of certain areas that are important to the history of Harpers Ferry. Natural resources may be modified to provide historic landscapes, views, or to prevent damage to cultural resources. Visitors would find a quiet, contemplative atmosphere with interpretation of the major features and their history. This zone would be applied primarily to areas containing historic farms and battlefields such as Bolivar Heights.



Historic Structure Zone

This zone would appear to be a living 19th century community. Visitors would be able to find information and interpretation of the many aspects of Harpers Ferry inside and outside the restored historic buildings. Opportunities to view special demonstrations or exhibits would be available. Access to this zone would be by park transportation. This zone would be applied to the Lower Town portion of the park.



Archeological Preservation Zone

The primary purpose of this zone is to protect and preserve cultural resources while allowing visitor access. Vegetation would be allowed to grow naturally unless cultural resources are threatened. Visitors would explore this zone primarily on their own with some interpretive signs provided along the trails. This zone would be applied to areas that are rich in archeological sites but largely undeveloped such as Virginus Island



Visitor Portal Zone

This zone encompasses the main entry points for visitors to the park. It would contain most of the visitor orientation and transportation-related facilities. Visitors would find public restrooms and drinking water and get information from park staff. All visitors would be encouraged to begin their visit here so that they may learn what is available and the best way to see the park.



Adaptive Use Zone

In this zone, management prescriptions would call for using historic structures for modern uses. For example, an historic house could be restored to its original appearance on the outside while the interior could be used for park offices. Visitors in this zone would engage in mostly self-guided exploration of building exteriors. Interpretive signs would be provided along the pathways. This zone would be applied to areas like the Storer College campus.

Facility Management Zone

The park's maintenance facilities, equipment and supplies would be located in this zone, away from sensitive natural and cultural resources and separated from visitor use areas. This zone would not be for public use.

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Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
General Management Plan
Newsletter #2, May 2004

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Planning Time Frame

The general management planning process for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is expected to take several years to complete. A summary of the process and anticipated timeframe are shown in the table at right. The public will have opportunities to share ideas and comments throughout the process.

Following this newsletter, the park and planning team will begin to expand upon the concepts described in this plan. Comments from the public on the first newsletter will help guide the team in the production of complete alternatives that will be the subject of a draft general management plan and its accompanying environmental impact statement.

How Can I Participate?

The planning team welcomes your thoughts, ideas, and concerns anytime throughout the planning process. This newsletter is a progress report. Your comments on this newsletter are welcome as are any additional suggestions or thoughts you may have.

Comments may be sent to the

Superintendent
Harpers Ferry National
Historical Park (GMP)
P.O. Box 65
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

Step	Time Frame	Planning Activity	How to be involved
1	Summer2003	Initiate Project The planning team assembles, begins to identify the project's scope, customize the planning process, and begins to establish contacts with participants.	
2	Fall - Winter 2003-2004	Define Planning Context and Foundation The team affirms the park's mission, purpose, and significance. Team members collect and analyze relevant data and public comments.	Read Newsletter. Send us your ideas and comments.
We Are Here	Spring - Fall 2004	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives Using staff and public input, the team explores what the park's future should look like and proposes a range of reasonable alternatives.	Read Newsletter. Send us you ideas and comments.
4	Winter 2004 - Summer 2005	Prepare a Draft Document <i>A Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> is published. The draft document describes the alternatives and impacts of implementing each. Based on the impacts and public input, a preferred alternative is identified in the document.	Read Draft Document. Send us your ideas and comments.
5	Spring 2006	Publish Final Document Based on review by the National Park Service and the public, the team revises the <i>General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> and distributes a final plan. The plan is approved in a published record of decision.	Come to meetings. Read the final plan, including NPS responses to substantive public comments and official letters.
6	Summer 2006 and Beyond	Implement the Approved Plan After the record of decision is issued, and as funding allows, the plan is implemented.	Work with national historical park to implement plan.

The next formal opportunity for public comment will be at the draft plan stage when copies of the document will be mailed to everyone on the mailing list and made available in local libraries for formal comment. That is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2005. During the review period, a series of public meetings will be held to answer questions about the plan. Park staff and NPS planning team members would also be available to meet with organizations, upon request, to explain the plan and answer questions.