



Manassas National Battlefield Park

Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement
April 2008

MANASSAS NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK

Fairfax and Prince William Counties, Virginia

This *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* describes and analyzes three alternatives for managing Manassas National Battlefield Park. The approved plan will help managers make decisions about managing natural and cultural resources, visitation, and development for the next 15 to 20 years. Issues that are addressed in this *General Management Plan* include commuter traffic on the portions of U.S. Route 29 and Virginia Route 234 in the park, the interpretive approach used to describe the two battles of Manassas and their role in the Civil War, and the types of facilities needed to support that approach. A separate environmental impact statement is being developed for the Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass, which is designed to remove commuter traffic from state and federal highways in the park.

Alternative A, the no-action alternative, describes the existing conditions and current directions of park management. It serves as the basis for comparing the other alternatives and for understanding why certain changes have been proposed. This alternative proposes limited, if any, changes in interpretation and management of the park. Coordination with agencies and other groups would continue. The park would be operated and maintained as before, and there would be very little change in visitor or other park facilities. Issues would be resolved as they emerged and not as the result of a comprehensive plan. Current laws, policies, and guidelines would continue to guide resource management actions.

The two “action” alternatives describe various approaches to managing the park’s resources and visitation. Both call for the removal of commuter and truck traffic from U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234. **Alternative B (NPS Preferred Alternative)—The Two Battles of Manassas—A Comprehensive Understanding of Each Battle** proposes a future condition at the park that focuses on interpreting the two battles of Manassas as distinct military events. The visitor center at Henry Hill would orient visitors to the park as a whole and focus on the Battle of First Manassas. A separate visitor contact station would focus on the events of the Battle of Second Manassas. **Alternative C — The Defining Moments of the Battles of Manassas—An Understanding of the Principal Events** would focus on the “watershed” events of the battles, encouraging visitors towards one major visitor center and multiple interpretive sites. The existing visitor center at Henry Hill, where a portion of the first battle took place, would be removed and a new visitor center would be constructed near Stone Bridge.

The public review period on the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* ended February 27, 2006. This final document summarizes the comments received and reflects changes made as a result of comments. The no-action period for this final plan and environmental impact statement will end 30 days after the Environmental Protection Agency has published a notice in the *Federal Register*. The course of action that would be implemented will be documented through the issuance of a record of decision once the no-action period has ended. For additional information about this plan, please contact Dr. Robert Sutton, Superintendent, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this *General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement* is to define a direction for the management of Manassas National Battlefield Park for the next 15 to 20 years. The approved plan will provide a framework for making decisions about managing the natural and cultural resources, visitor use, development, and operations of the park so that future opportunities and problems can be effectively addressed.

This updated plan is necessary to address current issues related to commuter traffic on the portions of U.S. Route 29 and Virginia Route 234 in the park, the interpretive approach used to describe the two battles of Manassas and their role in the Civil War, and the types of facilities needed to support that approach.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Issues addressed in this plan include the quality and amount of interpretation devoted to each of the two battles, heavy traffic on U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234, the preservation and rehabilitation of wartime and other historic structures and sites, recreational use of the park, future operational requirements, and the relationship between current vegetation patterns and the park's overall interpretive goals.

Heavy commuter and truck traffic on the portions of U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234 that run through the park detracts from visitor enjoyment, safety, and interpretive activities. This traffic makes it difficult for visitors to follow the automobile tour route or to visit park resources at their own pace.

Current vegetation patterns at the park are reminiscent of wartime patterns, but are often different from the exact wartime conditions that influenced the strategies and tactics of the two battles of Manassas. Rehabilitation of historic views would improve interpretive efforts, but that rehabilitation would also have effects on natural communities.

Recreation is the source of many visits to Manassas National Battlefield Park. It is important to manage this use without threatening or damaging the park's abundant cultural and natural resources or compromising its interpretive program.

The management alternatives described in this plan present challenges for park operations and maintenance. Transferring portions of U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234 to park control, rehabilitating and maintaining cultural landscapes, and upgrading interpretive materials and activities would all generate the need for additional operational and maintenance capacity.

ALTERNATIVES

To achieve the desired conditions at Manassas National Battlefield Park, the planning team developed a "no-action" alternative (continuing present management) and two "action" alternatives for managing the resources and visitor uses of the park. Each action alternative assigns portions of the park to different management zones. The management prescription for each zone identifies how the zone could be managed to achieve desired resource conditions and visitor experiences. In each action alternative, the five management zones — including Visitor Experience/Services, Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation/Preservation, Motorized Sightseeing/Park Circulation, Recreation, and Park Operations and Maintenance — specify a combination of resource, visitor experience, and facilities conditions.

Alternative A—Continuing Current Management Principles (No Action), represents a continuation of current management direction and trends at Manassas National Battlefield Park, and serves as a baseline for comparing the resource conditions and visitor experiences prescribed by the two action alternatives. Existing conditions, trends, and management practices would be maintained with only minor changes.

Managers would continue to follow the special mandates and servicewide mandates and policies. The current, most recognizable features in the park would continue to serve as the primary focus for visitor use and interpretation. Orientation and visitor services related to both battles would continue to be offered at the Henry Hill visitor center.

Under this alternative, historical park uses and development patterns would continue in accordance with the 1983 *General Management Plan*. The main roads within the park (U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234) would remain open to commuter and truck traffic. Current facilities at the park would be maintained, upgraded, and rehabilitated as needed. Some changes would be made to visitor use patterns to improve access to those lands added to the park since the 1983 *General Management Plan* was completed, including the Brawner Farm and Stuart's Hill tracts.

Alternative B (NPS Preferred Alternative)—The Two Battles of Manassas—A Comprehensive Understanding of Each Battle proposes a future condition at the park that focuses on interpreting the two battles of Manassas as distinct military events. Visitors would gain a thorough understanding of the first and second battles by visiting two separate visitor contact areas, each focused on one battle. These primary interpretive sites, including a visitor center and a visitor contact station, would be the two main focal points of visitor services in the park. Visitors could explore the many historic sites associated with each event throughout the park. The experience at each battlefield would be unique, with stand-alone visitor areas and automobile tour routes. Separate, chronological automobile and bicycle tours would be developed for each battle. In this alternative, the rehabilitation of the historic landscape would be critical to enable visitors to understand the events and military tactics associated with each battle.

Overall visitor experience and safety would be enhanced by the construction of the Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass. This road

would permit the removal of heavy commuter and commercial truck traffic from the portions of U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234 that run through the park. Through-traffic would be further limited with the addition of controlled access points.

Visitors would experience a battlefield landscape that resembles its wartime appearance. Key interpretive views would be preserved and re-created to help visitors understand how the battles unfolded and the importance of certain locations. Wartime structures would be preserved and other historic structures would be retained to mark the site of wartime buildings.

Alternative C—The Defining Moments of the Battles of Manassas—An Understanding of the Principal Events would focus on the “watershed” events of the battles, encouraging visitors towards one major visitor center and multiple key interpretive sites. Interpretation of these general events, the outcomes of the battles, and the broader story of the Civil War would be emphasized over the detailed military tactics of each battle. Although other sites in the park would be accessible, the concentration of interpretation and visitor use would be in areas that illustrate the “defining” moments of the battles. Rehabilitating the historic scene in some of these areas would help visitors understand these principal events.

In alternative C, the overall reasons and strategy for the Civil War would be presented in a comprehensive way. The importance of the battles of Manassas would be presented in the overall context of the Civil War. Other stories, such as the local families and African Americans that were affected by the battles of Manassas could be interpreted in the park. The general stories and outcomes of the battles would also be presented. The existing Henry Hill visitor center would be removed, and orientation and visitor services for both battles would be carried out from a new visitor center near Stone Bridge. The visitor experience would not be highly structured and key interpretive areas could be visited without regard to order or sequence. Visitors could

tailor their visit to those elements of the battles in which they were most interested.

Key interpretive areas would explain the battle events. In these areas, historic structures would serve interpretive functions and would be accessible to visitors. Extensive interpretive displays would explain the battle events and view corridors would be developed to enhance visitor understanding of the “watershed” battle events.

Overall visitor experience and safety would be enhanced by the construction of the Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass. This road would eliminate heavy commuter and commercial truck traffic through the park (U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234). Through-traffic would be further limited with the addition of controlled access points.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The planning team evaluated the potential consequences that the actions of each alternative could have on natural resources, cultural resources, the visitor experience, the socioeconomic environment, and park operations and maintenance. The beneficial or adverse effects of each alternative were categorized as either short-term or long-term, and their intensity was rated as negligible, minor, moderate, or major. The impacts of the various alternatives are compared in Table 2-3.

For **alternative A, the no-action alternative**, the presence of heavy commuter and truck traffic volumes on the portions of U.S. Route 29 and VA Route 234 that run through the park would continue to have major adverse impacts on visitor transportation within the park, and would also create adverse impacts on cultural resources, visitor experience, and the park’s soundscape. This traffic would continue to cause excessive delays, making it difficult for visitors to access and use all areas of the park. In addition, visitor focus would remain on the Battle of First Manassas (First Manassas) because of the location of the visitor center and the heavy volumes of non-park vehicles

that inhibit viewing many of the Battle of Second Manassas (Second Manassas) sites.

Alternative A would have negligible impacts on air quality; vegetation and wildlife; threatened, endangered, and rare species; water resources; the socioeconomic environment; and recreation. Because alternative A would not change the way that individuals access private or public property within or near park boundaries, this alternative would have a negligible impact on the socioeconomic environment. The heavy and increasing amount of non-park traffic on park roads would continue to have an adverse impact on park operations.

Under **alternative B, the preferred alternative**, the removal of non-park traffic from park roads, rehabilitation of historic vegetation patterns, removal of the existing U.S. Route 29 bridge over Bull Run, and continued preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures would have a moderate to major long-term beneficial impact on transportation and visitor experience. Interpretation related to the Battle of Second Manassas would continue to be located at the Stuart’s Hill visitor contact station until it could be relocated to Brawner Farm. The use of Brawner Farm to emphasize Second Manassas would have a beneficial impact on cultural resources and visitor experience.

Controlled access points at the park entrances would contribute to the beneficial impact on transportation, cultural resources, and visitor use. This change also would have a negligible long-term impact on owners of private property within park boundaries. The construction of a new bridge and associated access road over Bull Run would have a long-term adverse impact on cultural resources and water resources, while removing the modern highway bridge on U.S. Route 29 would have a beneficial impact on the cultural landscape.

Construction activities associated with these changes would have a negligible to minor short-term adverse impact on air quality, vegetation and wildlife, and the park’s

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soundscape. Air quality outside the park would be adversely affected by the rerouting of traffic onto the Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass.

Historic view rehabilitation would have a minor long-term adverse impact on some forest-based species, and a minor long-term beneficial impact on some species that inhabit grasslands and open fields. These changes would have no effect on threatened or endangered species and may affect but are not likely to adversely affect their habitats, because no supporting habitats would be disturbed. Alternative B would create negligible adverse impacts on water resources.

Enhanced recreation facilities and opportunities would create a minor long-term benefit for recreation.

Under **alternative C**, the removal of non-park traffic from park roads, removal of the existing U.S. Route 29 bridge over Bull Run, creation of a new visitor center, rehabilitation of some historic views, and continued preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures would have a major long-term beneficial impact on transportation and visitor experience.

Controlled access points at park entrances would contribute to the beneficial impact on transportation, cultural resources, and visitor use. The impact on owners of private property within park boundaries would be negligible.

The construction of a new bridge over Bull Run and associated access roads would have a long-term adverse impact on cultural resources and water resources, while removing the modern highway bridge on U.S. Route 29 would have a beneficial impact on the cultural landscape.

Construction activities associated with these changes would have a negligible to minor short-term adverse impact on air quality, vegetation and wildlife, and the park's soundscape. Air quality outside the park would be adversely affected by the rerouting of traffic

onto the Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass.

Historic view rehabilitation would have a minor long-term adverse impact on some forest-based species, and a minor long-term beneficial impact on some species that inhabit grasslands and open fields. These changes would have no effect on threatened or endangered species and may affect but are not likely to adversely affect their habitats, because no supporting habitats would be disturbed. Alternative C would create negligible adverse impacts on water resources.

Enhanced recreation facilities and opportunities would create a minor long-term benefit for recreation.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT PLAN

The 60-day review and comment period for the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* occurred between December 30, 2005 and February 28, 2006. The comments received have been reviewed and analyzed. Many of the comments received were at the implementation level and will be addressed in planning that will tier from this *General Management Plan*. The comments received are discussed in greater detail in the "Consultation and Coordination" chapter.

Alternative B, the preferred alternative, has been modified based on stipulations from the Commonwealth Transportation Board in its approval of the Battlefield Bypass on June 15, 2006. The Board was concerned about maintaining access on U.S. Route 29 in the event of an emergency. To address this stipulation, NPS management proposed that the modern highway bridge over Bull Run on U.S. Route 29 be removed and that a new bridge and access road be constructed farther south. This approach would

- maintain emergency access on U.S. Route 29

- remove a modern intrusion in the cultural landscape in an important area of the battlefield
- improve the visitor experience and interpretive opportunities at Stone Bridge.

The new bridge and access road were analyzed as part of alternative C in the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*.

This final plan includes agency and organization letters as well as responses to all substantive comments. This *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* will be distributed to the public. After a 30-day no-action period, a record of decision identifying the selected alternative (the approved plan) will be issued.

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