

Repairs to Fort Jefferson Counterscarp and Dredging of Selected Areas



The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning the preparation of a plan for repairs to the Fort Jefferson counterscarp and dredging at selected areas at Dry Tortugas National Park (the Park). Fort Jefferson is located on Garden Key within the Park. The Park is located about 70 miles west of Key West and encompasses seven keys, collectively known as the Dry Tortugas. The keys are composed of sand and limestone and are surrounded by coral reefs and open water.

Fort Jefferson is one of the most ambitious and expansive 19th century American masonry coastal forts. The fort is also one of the least altered examples of third system fortifications in the country. The fort is composed of a concrete and mortar core covered by a brick facade, or scarp. It is surrounded by a shallow moat and counterscarp (moat wall). Originally built to protect shipping access to the Gulf of Mexico, construction began in 1846 and ceased in 1875. The fort is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is

one of the primary purposes for which the Park was created by Congress in 1992. Today, Fort Jefferson is the primary destination for people visiting the park. Garden Key also contains the park's visitor center, administrative areas, docking and mooring, camping, and beaches. The Park is also recognized for their near-pristine natural resources including coral reefs, sea grass beds, fisheries, sea turtle and bird nesting habitat.

In 2017, Hurricane Irma damaged the fort's counterscarp and deposited sediment inside the moat and adjacent areas and along the Garden Key waterfront. The purpose of this project is to repair and restore the primary elements of Fort Jefferson damaged as a result of Hurricane Irma, restore water flow within the moat, and allow for continued unobstructed recreational and park use of the dock and slips at the Garden Key waterfront.

We want to hear from you!

Please submit comments via the following:

Electronically:

Submit your comments via the NPS's Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/drto>

By Mail or Hand-delivered:

Address your comments to: Superintendent, Attn: Fort Jefferson Counterscarp Repairs Project, 40001 SR 9336, Homestead, FL 33034



Hurricane Irma, 2017

- In September 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall in Florida as a Category 4 hurricane.
- Storm surge and winds from the hurricane resulted in extensive damage to Fort Jefferson's counterscarp, the perimeter wall that protects the fort from daily wave action and winter storms and is also an extremely popular walking trail around Fort Jefferson.
- Sediment was deposited by the hurricane inside the moat and adjacent areas, and along the waterfront on the southeast shore of Garden Key.



Counterscarp. Access to the counterscarp has been limited due to unsafe conditions and closures as a result of the damages from Hurricane Irma.



Sediment deposition. Sediment is blocking natural tidal flushing, causing an increase in algae and mosquito propagation, and created a hypoxic environment for wildlife.



Sediment deposition. The deposition of sediments on Garden Key has partially filled in the slips where visitors dock and park staff moors its small boat fleet. During daily low tides, the small boats become grounded causing damage to hulls and limits the ability of the Park to launch Search and Rescue missions as well as regular operations.

Development of Alternative Concepts

This project will evaluate options to repair the counterscarp, with new materials and methods to achieve a more durable structure, while matching and maintaining the historic fabric. In addition, dredging of the moat, slips and finger piers at the Garden Key waterfront will allow for continued safe and unobstructed recreational and park use of the dock and slips.

Concept A - No Action

- No changes or repairs would be made to the Fort Jefferson counterscarp.
- The hurricane damages to the counterscarp and waterfront would remain and continue to deteriorate. The deterioration of the counterscarp threatens the integrity of the investment already made to protect the scarp.
- This concept would *not* restore visitor access or historic character and preservation to the Fort Jefferson counterscarp.

Concept B – Repairs to Fort Jefferson Counterscarp including dredging of the Moat and Finger Slips

- Would repair the Fort Jefferson counterscarp and restore visitor access.
- The repairs to the counterscarp would make Fort Jefferson more resilient to sea level rise and climate change.
- Dredging in the moat would restore water flow, enhance water quality and wildlife habitat within the moat.
- Dredging at the slips and finger piers would restore unobstructed access and safe operations for the park and recreational vessels.



How to Comment

Public participation is an important element of the planning process and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) review. We welcome your ideas, concerns, suggestions and potential topics for consideration. Please share your thoughts on the concepts no later than **Monday, February 14, 2022**.

You may provide your comments:

- **Via the project website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/drto>**, or
- **By writing to:** Superintendent, Attn: Fort Jefferson Counterscarp Repairs Project, 40001 SR 9336, Homestead, FL 33034

If you would like more information or have questions related to this project, please contact **Glenn Simpson at Glenn_Simpson@nps.com or 305-224-4422**. Thank you for your interest in repairing Fort Jefferson!

Milestone	Targeted Schedule	Opportunities for Public Input
Public Input	January 2022 – February 2022	Review preliminary concepts and provide your comments at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/drto
NPS analyze public comments and revise concepts	March 2022	
NPS prepares draft plan and initiate environmental and NHPA compliance	Spring/Summer 2022	
Public review of plan/ Environmental Assessment	Fall 2022	Review the plan/environmental assessment and provide your comments at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/drto
Decision document	Winter 2023	See final plan and decision document at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/drto

