

# Martin Van Buren

## National Historic Site

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



### An Invitation to Join the Planning Effort

General Management Plan • Newsletter #1 • February 2009



# Martin Van Buren

*National Historic Site*

## A Message from the Superintendent

### Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The National Park Service has begun developing a General Management Plan (GMP) for Martin Van Buren National Historic Site in Kinderhook, New York. The result of our multi-year effort will be a dynamic document that provides guidance for the park's day-to-day management as well as longer-range strategies for resource protection, visitor use, partnerships, and park operations.

We invite you to join us in this planning process by attending our public meetings, making comments when possible, and staying informed. This first newsletter should give you an overview of this process and some of the planning team's foundation work that has already taken place. Some of you may have attended last year's meeting where we asked interested friends and neighbors to consider some of the issues that need to be addressed as we move forward with the planning process. Here are some of your thoughts:

- Lindenwald is important to the identity of the local and larger community and its role in national history.
- Because of people's attraction to, and pride in, historic resources, agriculture and open space, Martin Van Buren NHS can be a magnet for attracting a wide range of visitors to the region.
- It could be possible to establish a "driving trail" that links the variety of Martin Van Buren resources in the area.
- The story of Martin Van Buren the farmer helps support the role that agriculture has played throughout the history of the Hudson River Valley.
- The park itself is a critical part of Columbia County's tourism future, and deserves better visitor facilities.

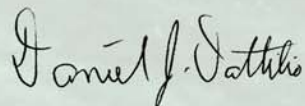
These ideas aid our team in understanding the integral role the park has in the region and will provide direct input into the GMP. We weigh and consider every comment we receive from the public as well as issues that are specific to the park. The General Management Plan will examine different ways the park can:

- Best protect the park's resources;
- Offer interesting and meaningful experiences to those who visit Lindenwald;
- Tell stories appropriate to Martin Van Buren's life and how those stories fit in with other places honoring Martin Van Buren;
- Determine appropriate levels of visitor use and the types of facilities needed to support the park's mission and goals; and
- Join with local government agencies and organizations on mutual regional benefits.

Using these ideas and others, the planning team will consider options for the future, and develop them as management alternatives. The alternatives help us to envision different directions the national historic site might take over the next 15 to 20 years. These alternatives will be presented at a later date for your review and comment.

I encourage you to become involved in the future of Martin Van Buren National Historic Site. Please join us at our next public meeting February 18, from 7-9 p.m. at the St. Luke's Lutheran Church at 1010 Kinderhook Street. in Valatie. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the work that we have already accomplished as well as comments on the park's direction for the future.

Thank you for your interest in Martin Van Buren National Historic Site.

  
Daniel J. Dattilio  
Superintendent



## Why is a General Management Plan Needed at the Park?

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site was established in 1974 and this will be its first General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP, with a 15-20 year planning window, will provide the first comprehensive planning strategy for the park since its 1970 Master Plan. It will propose strategies and partnerships for resource protection and visitor services, grounds and facilities, and address the impacts of development proposals on adjacent lands.

The GMP will take a fresh look at the management of the park's cultural and natural resources and the opportunities they offers visitors. In consultation with interested citizens, organizations and governmental agencies, the National Park Service articulates a shared vision for the future of the park in a GMP. The GMP process will strive to inform and educate the public about the need for the GMP and about the key issues being addressed; provide the public with opportunities for meaningful involvement in the planning process; and strengthen and enhance the relationships between the Park and its stakeholders.

The elements that will be addressed in the GMP include:

**Step One:** What are the Most Important Resources, Experiences, and Stories?

- Affirm and/or identify the park purpose, and significance
- Affirm and/or identify fundamental and other important resources and values
- Affirm and/or identify primary interpretive themes

**Step Two:** What is the Status of These Resources?

- Identify, analyze and explain key resources and values
- Identify agency and public interests and concerns

**Step Three:** What are the Possibilities for Future Management Alternatives?

- Identify alternative concepts and potential management zones
- Develop management alternatives and desired conditions

**Step Four:** What is the Best Long-Term Management Direction?

- Analyze environmental impacts
- Analyze value to the public
- Review alternatives
- Record the decision
- Produce the final plan

The public outreach and participation component of the GMP is underway. A Public Meeting was held on January 29, 2008 in Kinderhook and a Public Open House is scheduled for February 18, 2009 in Valatie. An additional public meeting will be held to present the draft GMP. The park anticipates the Final General Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement to be completed in early 2010.



*Boy Scouts visit Martin Van Buren NHS during the Lindenwald rededication ceremony.*

## A Foundation for Planning

### Park Description

Martin Van Buren NHS was established in 1974 to protect and interpret Lindenwald, the home and farm of the eighth President of the United States. The 36-room mansion, South Gatehouse, Old Post Road trace, museum collection, cultural landscape, and overall historic setting and views are the main resources.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of Martin Van Buren NHS is to preserve Lindenwald, the home and farm of Martin Van Buren, and to provide present and future generations with opportunities to understand Van Buren's life and public career in the social, political and economic context of the antebellum period and its relevance to contemporary American life.

### Significance Statement

Martin Van Buren, eighth President of the United States, was a dominant figure in antebellum politics and a primary architect of the American party system. Located in Kinderhook, New York, the rural Dutch village where he was born and raised, Lindenwald was the only home



*View across the farmlands of Lindenwald.*

Van Buren ever owned. He returned to Lindenwald after his presidential term, becoming a key figure in the re-orientation of the national debate around the issue of slavery.

He was a contender for the Democratic nomination in 1844 and the presidential candidate in 1848 for the Free Soil party, the first mass anti-slavery party in the United States. Lindenwald reflected Van Buren's interest in progressive farming and his political beliefs, which emphasized the value of agriculture and free labor to the future of democracy.

### Fundamental Resources

Fundamental resources are the features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, and scenes that are critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance. The fundamental resources for Martin Van Buren NHP are identified as:

- The Martin Van Buren Home and South Gatehouse
- Museum Collection
- Farm Cottage
- Cultural Landscape of Lindenwald including the historic farmlands
- Several archeological sites and resources associated with Van Buren's era



*Quilting demonstration at the Martin Van Buren NHS 25th Anniversary celebration.*





*Re-enactors inside of the Lindenwald mansion.*

### Interpretive Themes

1. Martin Van Buren's political career illuminates the struggles of America's second generation of leaders as they faced the challenges that confronted the young republic. Martin Van Buren was a primary architect of the party system that continues to shape American political life.
2. Lindenwald was where Martin Van Buren continued his political career and became an important figure in the political debate over slavery leading up to the Civil War.
3. Lindenwald was an expression of Martin Van Buren's political beliefs, which emphasized the importance of agriculture to the future of democracy. On the farm located in his ancestral community, Van Buren practiced progressive farming and employed a diverse farm and household labor force reflecting the complex social changes occurring in America prior to the Civil War.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

The park presently enjoys a strong working relationship with a number of stakeholders in the community. It has a General Agreement with the "Friends of Lindenwald", a volunteer public support group that contributes constituency support and funding for a variety of park goals. Park staff also works closely with the following organizations:

- Adjacent and nearby landowners;
- Open Space Institute, which is dedicated to the conservation of regional landscapes in the Hudson River Valley, Catskills and Northern Forest;

- Columbia Land Conservancy, which preserves farmland, wildlife habitat, and rural open space in the Columbia County region;
- Roxbury Farm, one of the largest community-supported farms in the US;
- Historic Kinderhook Committee, a local group that encourages local historic preservation projects; and
- Columbia County Historical Society, a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the history and culture of Columbia County.

Other stakeholders include: Van Buren descendents and scholars, scholars of the decorative arts and the antebellum period, Columbia County tourism interests, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the Hudson River Ramble, Hudsonia Ltd., Kinderhook Neighbors for Good Growth, American Farmland Trust, Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, Vassar College, SUNY Albany, and the Center for Applied Historical Research at The University of Albany. The Stockbridge-Munsee Community, a federally recognized Native American tribe for this region, will be formally consulted and encouraged to participate fully, actively and throughout the planning process.



*Harvest Day 2003.*



## Planning Issues and Site Challenges

The cultural landscape that comprises the park's historic core retains integrity in setting, design, and location, contributing to our understanding of Van Buren's life at Lindenwald. The formal landscape was developed in the context of a large working farm, much of which is outside the current park boundary. Van Buren's purchase of a farm was a direct expression of his republican political philosophy. The park's proposed boundary adjustment represents an opportunity to address issues related to the numerous natural, historic, cultural and scenic resources on the site. It could also expand the recreational assets to visitors. The following issues have been identified through public and internal meetings to be addressed in the GMP.

### Resource Protection

How can the park manage conflicting uses that may have impacts on the park's historic resources, historic scene and cultural landscape?

### Visitor Experience

How does the park provide for a greater understanding of Martin Van Buren's life, contributions and relevancy to a diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century society?

### Operations and Facilities

What are necessary facilities for park operations, visitor use and visitor experience?

### Partnerships

How can the park optimize its relationship with existing partners and expand partnerships within the region?



*Martin Van Buren NHS ornament displayed on the official White House Christmas tree, created by Bonnie White.*

### Boundary Adjustment

What are appropriate uses and visitor experiences on the lands added to the park boundary and how will they relate to uses and visitor experiences within the present boundary?



*The Green Room of the Lindenwald mansion*



*Main Hall of the Lindenwald mansion*

## Recent Accomplishments, Works In Progress, and Special Events

Over the last several years Martin Van Buren NHS has started a tradition of hosting well-organized special events throughout the year, which have brought greater numbers of local visitors to the park. For the second year in a row over 2,000 visitors attended the Annual Harvest Day at Lindenwald in September. Almost 300 guests attended the Annual Winter Celebration held the first weekend in December. The park is also becoming involved in public outreach activities to build awareness and support for the park, and to become a valuable member and contributor to the community.

Martin Van Buren NHS has undertaken a number of studies in recent years that will contribute to the foundation of the GMP. Perhaps most important is the *Cultural Landscape Report for the Martin Van Buren Farm*. Completed in 2004, the report identifies and clearly explains the history and resources of the Van Buren Farm and serves to form the statement of significance. Also important to the foundation is the 2006 *Historic Resources Study*, and the 2004 *Biological Survey*. The findings from all studies undertaken will assist the park in setting the planning framework and selecting appropriate alternatives for the GMP. Other studies in progress include:

**Ethnohistory Study (2009)** Will gather information about Native American tribes surrounding the park (the

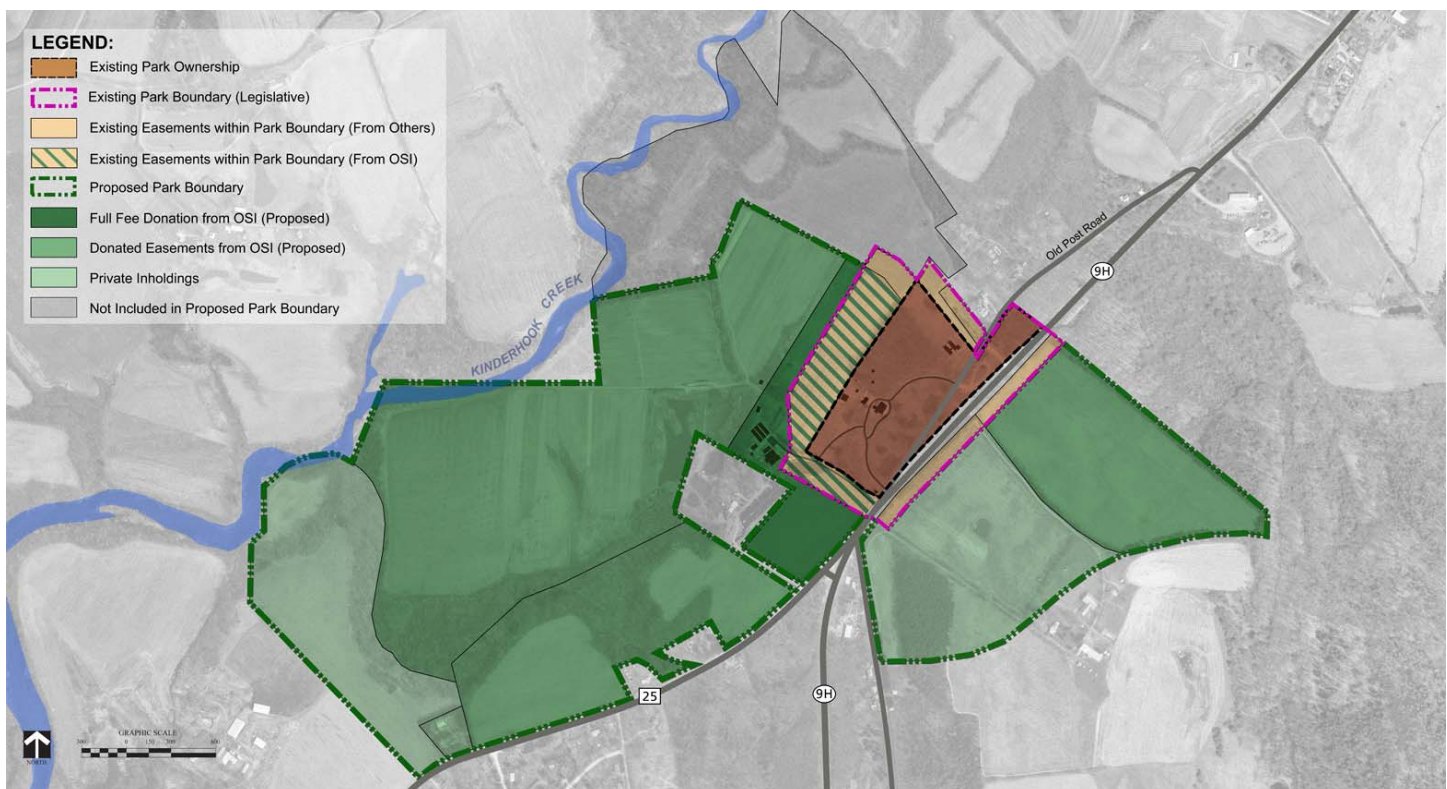
Mohican aboriginal homeland) to be used in carrying out Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act responsibilities.

**Visitor Study (2009)** The goal of this study is to learn about expectations, opinions, and interest of visitors to Martin Van Buren NHS.

**Administrative History (2008)** Provides a comprehensive account of the establishment and administration of Martin Van Buren NHS from its creation to the present.

### Boundary Adjustment Status

Legislation was introduced into the U.S. Congress last year, and was recently passed by the Senate to adjust the boundary of the park by 261 acres. This would bring the total acreage of the park to 300 acres, and incorporate the majority of Van Buren's original Lindenwald farm. A small portion of the new land would be donated to the NPS for operations, but the majority would remain in private ownership and be used mainly for agricultural purposes. Development rights, or "easements", on these private lands have been purchased by the Open Space Institute. We look forward to the legislation moving through Congress in the next year, and being signed into law. To be complete, the boundary legislation will need to be passed by the House and then is signed into law by President Obama.

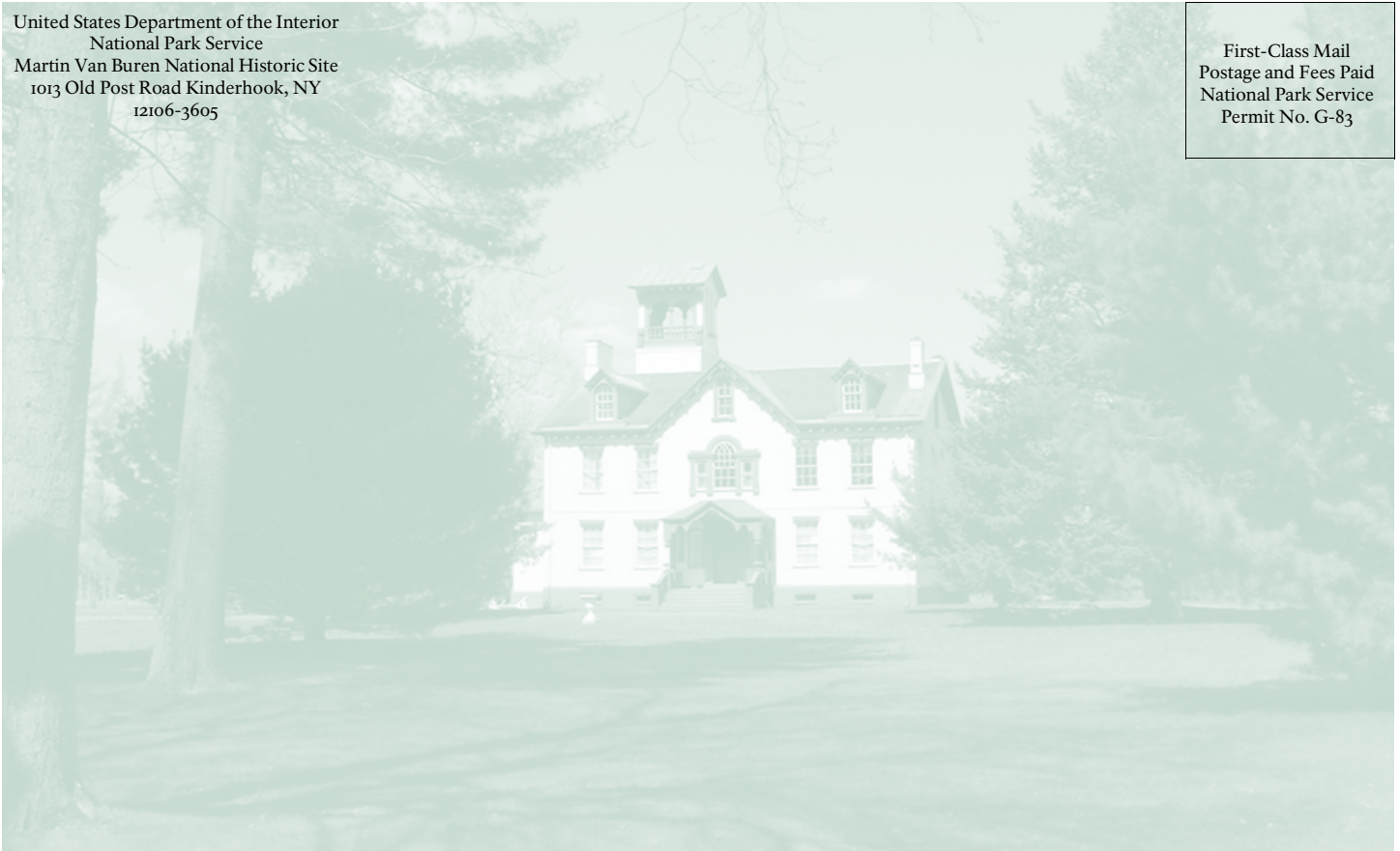


Proposed Boundary Adjustment Plan.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Martin Van Buren National Historic Site  
1013 Old Post Road Kinderhook, NY  
12106-3605

First-Class Mail  
Postage and Fees Paid  
National Park Service  
Permit No. G-83



### PLEASE JOIN US

February 18, 2009 from 7-9 p.m.  
at

St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
1010 Kinderhook St. (Route 9)  
Valatie, New York

for the  
Public Meeting  
of the

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site  
General Management Plan

This public meeting is being held to discuss the general management plan project and to ask for comments from those in the immediate and broader community.

### To Stay Informed:

Contact the Superintendent's Office at 518-758-9689.

Email the Park at: [mava\\_info@nps.gov](mailto:mava_info@nps.gov).

Visit the Park's website at: [www.nps.gov/mava](http://www.nps.gov/mava).

To be added to our mailing list or send written comments, address correspondence to: Superintendent, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, 1013 Old Post Road, Kinderhook, NY 12106-3605