



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Asan and Agat Units Management Plan War in the Pacific National Historical Park

SUMMARY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

The National Park Service (NPS) conducted civic engagement to seek public comments, concerns, and ideas related to the Asan and Agat Units Management Plan (UMP) for War in the Pacific National Historical Park. This report summarizes all public comments received during the civic engagement period, which occurred between August 4 and September 30, 2022.

As part of civic engagement, the park hosted the following in-person meetings:

DATE AND TIME	LOCATION	ATTENDANCE
Monday, August 29, 2022 6:00 – 8:00 pm	Asan Mayor's Office	16
Tuesday, August 30, 2022 5:00 – 7:00 pm	Hågat Community Center	2
Wednesday, August 31, 2022 2:00 – 3:30 pm	Guam Museum, Hågatña	15

During the same week of the public meetings mentioned above, the park also set up informational tables both in the morning and evening at Asan Beach to solicit input on the UMP. Park staff also had an informational table, with an opportunity for the public to ask and provide comments, at the CHamoru Village Wednesday Night Market on August 31, 2022. The planning team shared information with about 90 distinct individuals or small groups as part of these informal tabling efforts.

The project home page on the NPS's Planning, Environment & Public Comment (PEPC) website https://parkplanning.nps.gov/wapa_ump provided information about the UMP, a copy of the civic engagement newsletter that was distributed during meetings and other engagements with the public, [an interactive online StoryMap](#), and an opportunity to provide comments directly into PEPC.

Methodology and Correspondence Analysis

The NPS shared five questions in the newsletter. These questions were included on the PEPC site as well as in the public and stakeholder meetings. These questions were:

- 1) What do you like about the draft desired conditions and why? What would you change about the desired conditions?
- 2) What do you like about the preliminary concepts and why? What would you change about the concepts?
- 3) What resources and experiences in the park are the most important to you?
- 4) What resources and experiences should be considered a priority as the NPS responds to climate change impacts?
- 5) What other ideas do you have?

The summary below captures the comments received, grouped by themes and topics, based on the content of the comments themselves. An interdisciplinary team of NPS staff read every correspondence received and analyzed the comments. The analysis does not contain direct quotes from the comments received, but rather identifies common themes expressed by commenters, as well as viewpoints that were expressed only once. Collectively, the content of the comments, rather than the number of times a comment was received will be used to inform the development of the UMP.

Comment Summary

The following summary incorporates both the oral comments from the public meetings and the written comments received by the NPS through PEPC, the project e-mail mailbox, and hard copy comment forms. All comments received were reviewed and considered to inform the preparation of the plan. Some comments provided general support and are embedded as applicable in the comment summaries below. The three biggest issue topics were categorized as: Interpretation and Education, Visitor Use and Facilities, and Resource Management. The NPS also received a number of comments emphasizing the importance of involving local communities and villages in the planning process and the need to improve the public safety at the park units. In addition, a few participants asked questions and provided comments about private landownership issues within areas of the park, notably the Asan Inland Unit.

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

One of the main themes reflected in the public comments is a desire for the park to include broader historical perspectives in interpretation. Several commenters noted that the NPS should focus on the natural and cultural histories of the park sites and the familial and cultural connections that community members have held to these resources over time, in addition to the story already told about World War II.

Some of the additional perspectives that commenters were interested in interpreting include indigenous traditional knowledge; changes to the cultural landscape over time; and the stories of CHamoru, Japanese, and Filipino people with connections to the sites. One commenter asked that the NPS consider telling the story of the ancient CHamorus living in Asan, Piti, Sumai, and Hågat, including the natural environment (such as plants and animals), cultural practices, life during the Spanish period, and life during the later American period leading up to World War II. The NPS was encouraged to focus interpretation on the local histories of CHamoru people who lived on park lands, rather than presenting a more generalized history of CHamoru culture. In addition, a commenter expressed the importance of explaining differences in cultural values when telling these different stories about World War II and periods of colonization.

The NPS was also asked to tell the story of the refugee camp that was located at Asan Beach Unit during the Vietnam War. One commenter suggested a need for the unmarked graves in the Asan Inland Unit to be commemorated. Other commenters expressed the importance of placing past conflicts in the context of what they mean for the future and highlighting the importance of peace.

There was also public interest in providing more interactive experiences, especially for school-aged children, to teach them about the park sites. A few commenters suggested that the NPS include more opportunities for youth involvement at the park units. Another commenter requested more interpretive opportunities in general. The NPS was also encouraged to continue providing community opportunities at the park for visitors with disabilities. Several commenters requested additional rangers at the park units, to provide more engagement with the public through tours and natural and cultural resource exhibits.

VISITOR USE AND FACILITIES

Climate Change Impacts on Facilities

The NPS received several comments focused on the need to prepare the park for climate change and sea level rise. Respondents offered a variety of comments on this topic. Some participants supported the idea of a living shoreline and promoting native plants to help minimize the impact of storm surge. Many commenters identified the need for improved drainage to reduce flooding, especially in the coastal units including Asan Beach. Flooding from past storms at Asan Beach was an issue mentioned by several individuals. A few participants emphasized the importance of protecting existing coral reefs as much as possible. One commenter suggested that NPS build a seawall to protect the coastal units. Another commenter suggested that risks posed to facilities could be minimized by using haligi-type architecture for necessary structures in areas prone to flooding.

Visitor-Serving and Interpretive Facilities

A few commenters agreed with the NPS concepts to relocate the restrooms at Asan Beach and Ga'an Point to higher ground, as necessary, to address sea level rise and inundation. The NPS was asked to continue to provide restrooms in the more highly visited units, as they are considered an important community amenity.

Several commenters suggested that the NPS could improve maintenance at the park units, including more regular waste management and additional clean-up of lawns and picnic areas. A few commenters requested additional trash cans and recycling. Others emphasized the importance of continuing to provide benches, picnic facilities, and restrooms, even in the face of climate change impacts. Similarly, a commenter suggested the need for more benches and picnic tables at the Agat Unit. One commenter suggested that the NPS should provide camping opportunities at Asan Beach Unit.

A number of commenters suggested that the NPS should provide additional interpretive facilities, especially at the Asan Beach Unit. One commenter would like to see the NPS build a small visitor center or visitor contact stations at Asan Beach. Another commenter had a similar request but did not specify the location within the park. Several other commenters supported the idea of providing a mobile visitor center or an open-air interpretive kiosk that could help to educate visitors about the park.

Flags and Monuments

Some members of the public requested that the NPS display the American flag more prominently on park grounds, specifically at the Asan Beach Unit, where a previous flag was recently removed. Another related comment suggested that the park could move the flags currently at Ga'an Point to higher ground on Rizal Point, if the flags are in danger of inundation from sea level rise.

A few people provided comments on the monuments along the shoreline at Asan Beach. One respondent noted the importance of protecting the monuments but did not express a preference for how they should be protected. Another commenter expressed concern regarding the lack of CHamoru monuments in the park. Another member of the public noted that the park's monuments should also commemorate the important role of the U.S. Army in addition to the U.S. Marines during the Battle of Guam.

Trails and Walkways

Trail use was an important topic for a number of commenters. Several respondents supported the NPS preliminary proposal for additional trail opportunities within the four park units. Those commenting on this subject expressed a need for additional safe walking and hiking opportunities on Guam, especially opportunities that offer a connection to nature and history. However, there was also some concern about how the new potential trail networks in the Asan Inland Unit of the park would impact those who live at adjacent residences.

One participant noted that it would be interesting to see what World War II resources could be experienced from trails in the Mt. Alifan Unit, connecting to Hågat or Santa Rita. Another commenter supported the idea of adding a trail at Rizal Point and suggested providing lighting for safety. Another person suggested that the NPS increase the size of the existing walking trails at Ga'an Point and also provide lighting. One comment stressed the importance of accessible trails, particularly providing access to the beach and along the coastline for people using

wheelchairs. The NPS was also encouraged to provide distance markers on the existing trails to help visitors understand how long it might take to reach key destinations. Several commenters requested that more lighting be installed at the units to enhance safety for those visiting the park and using walkways in the early morning and the evening.

Additional Comments on Facilities

A couple of commenters suggested that the NPS include a baseball field at Asan Beach Unit, to replace the baseball field that existed at Asan Beach before it became a national park site. An additional two respondents asked whether food vendors could be permitted in the park units as a way to welcome additional visitors to the park, but one of these commenters wondered how that would impact food vending opportunities at other sites on the island.

Another commenter encouraged the park to achieve carbon neutrality, using available tools to achieve net zero emissions and pursuing carbon off-sets in the interim. The same commenter further suggested that NPS convert to renewable energy for all NPS energy use.

A few commenters urged the park to ensure that Congressional appropriations are available to fund the preliminary concepts described in the newsletter and also to provide for their long-term maintenance.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Climate Change Impacts to Resources

Resource management includes both natural and cultural resources. The NPS received several comments on resource management, and many of these comments focused on protecting the park's resources from the impacts of climate change. The climate change impacts discussed included sea level rise, changes in precipitation and storm intensity, loss of coral reefs, and the related adverse issues that would result, including flooding at the beach units and additional habitat loss.

Participants recommended that the NPS should integrate CHamoru traditional ecological knowledge into resource management to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. The NPS was also encouraged to return the Asan Beach Unit to its original pre-development condition to improve its resilience to climate change. The park was additionally asked to consider the character of the cultural landscape at Asan Beach at different periods in history and determine which period of time should be reflected in the experience of the landscape. This commenter noted that at one time Asan Beach was occupied by rice fields and homes.

One commenter supported the NPS preliminary proposal to replant coral reefs and suggested that the park include the local community in this process, including offering trainings on this topic. Another commenter emphasized that protecting biodiversity should continue to be a priority in NPS management.

Natural Resources

A few comments focused on natural resources and traditional uses. Some respondents suggested that the park also consider the importance of native animal species to ecosystem health and climate resilience and encouraged the NPS to address plant and animal symbiosis in the plan. A related comment suggested the park should have more monitoring of animal and plant life. One commenter expressed concern about natural resources, stating that the condition of flora and fauna within the park has deteriorated over time. Another related comment suggested the need to propagate and reintroduce native plant species throughout the four units included in the UMP.

One participant asked the NPS to plant more coconut trees along the shoreline at Asan Beach Unit to mitigate the loss of existing coconut trees due to infestation from the coconut rhinoceros beetle.

One commenter requested that the park include traditional sustainable fishing at the beach units.

Cultural Resources

Those commenting on cultural resources emphasized the importance of preserving cultural resources including archeological resources, such as pottery and stone artifacts, and historic structures from World War II. Commenters expressed support for monitoring the sites to preserve their integrity. One respondent observed that it is extremely important and urgent for the NPS to preserve the tangible evidence of the World War II conflict, including historic fortifications along the shoreline that are threatened by rising sea levels and storm surge.

Submerged Resources

Some commenters expressed concern regarding underwater resources. Specifically, these respondents requested that the NPS provide a means to protect the submerged amtrac, or Landing Vehicle Tracked, at Asan Beach Unit and conduct necessary surveys of other underwater cultural resources. Another, similar comment expressed the need for the NPS to protect and preserve all underwater archeological resources. One commenter expressed concern about the underwater trail concept, noting that it might have the potential to result in damage to underwater archeological resources. This commenter asked the NPS to consider whether a more formal interpretive program and well-defined underwater trails could reduce the risk of impact to submerged resources.

ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL VILLAGE EXPERTS

Several commenters requested that local villages are given more input into the management of park resources and in telling the story of the park sites. Some respondents requested that the NPS employ CHamoru elders with expertise in traditional knowledge and cultural practices to enhance interpretation and education for visitors. Suggested examples of additional interpretation include sharing traditional knowledge of habitats and ecosystems, using

indigenous place names, and demonstrating traditional practices such as fishing methods, use of medicinal plants, gathering of plants for food, and farming and ranching. Also, it was recommended that the NPS continue to reach out to the local villages and community centers at Agat, Asan, Santa Rita, and Piti to keep people informed and to engage them in the planning process.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Several commenters expressed concern about public safety within the park units, especially at Asan Beach. Commenters expressed concern regarding both feral and off-leash dogs, crime, drug use, and a lack of law enforcement in the unit. A lack of lighting on the walking paths was a common concern as well. One commenter suggested that the NPS should install gates at the Asan Beach Unit to secure the area at night.

PRIVATE PROPERTY ISSUES

Some commenters were concerned about private property issues for residences located near the park, or for privately owned lands within the boundary of the Asan Inland Unit. Many of the comments submitted on this topic were about issues not related to the UMP, such as requests for private road upgrades and questions about permissible uses of private property.