

This Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement describes the resource conditions and visitor experience as they should exist at the Roosevelt–Vanderbilt National Historic Sites over the next 20 years. It presents three management alternatives, one of which has been selected as the preferred option. It also assesses the potential impacts of the alternatives on park resources, the visitor experience, park operations, and the surrounding area.

This document is available for public review for 60 days. The public review period will end 60 days after a Notice of Availability is published in the *Federal Register*. During the review period, the National Park Service will accept written and oral comments, which will be carefully reviewed and incorporated, as appropriate, in the final plan and final environmental impact statement.

You can submit comments via mail or online to the addresses below. Please note that names and addresses of people who comment become part of the public record. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available.

Please submit comments online to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/rova> or via mail to:
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Roosevelt-Vanderbilt

National Historic Sites

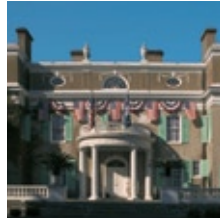
Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site



TOP COTTAGE



HOME OF FDR



VANDERBILT MANSION



VAL-KILL



Draft General Management Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Northeast Region
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Contents

iv	Preface
vi	Executive Summary
	Part One:
	Foundation for Planning
3	Introduction
4	Purpose of the General Management Plan
8	Overview of the National Historic Sites
14	Purpose and Significance of the National Historic Sites
16	Interpretive Themes
20	Associated Resources Outside of Park Ownership
23	Related Programs, Plans, and Initiatives
25	Planning Issues
30	Analysis of Fundamental Resources and Values
	Part Two:
	The Alternatives and Their Common Elements
45	Overview
45	Goals for the National Historic Sites
46	Management Zoning
51	Developing New Directions
52	Similarities among the Management Alternatives
59	The Management Alternatives
94	Cost Estimates for the Alternatives
95	The Environmentally and Agency Preferred Alternative
98	Ideas Considered but Not Advanced for Further Analysis
	Part Three:
	Affected Environment
103	Overview
103	Cultural Resources
123	Natural Resources
138	Visitor Use and Experience
149	Park Operations and Facilities
154	Socioeconomic Environment

	Part Four: Environmental Consequences
165	Introduction
165	Analyzing Impacts
171	Impacts on Cultural Resources
189	Impacts on Natural Resources
198	Impacts on Visitor Use and Experience
205	Impacts on Park Operations and Facilities
213	Impacts on Socioeconomic Environment
	Part Five: Coordination and Consultation
231	Summary of Planning
235	Compliance with Federal and State Laws and Regulations, Policies, and Mandates
240	Section 106 Compliance Requirements for Future Undertakings
242	List of Draft General Management Plan Recipients
242	List of Preparers, Partners, Consultants, and Advisors
	Part Six: Appendices
247	Appendix A: Legislation
269	Appendix B: Historical Overview
287	Appendix C: Glossary of Terms
299	Appendix D: Visitor Experience Vision Statement
301	Appendix E: Visitor Experience & Resource Protection (Carrying Capacity)
304	Appendix F: Treatment, Use, and Condition of Primary Historic Buildings
312	Appendix G: List of Classifield Structures
318	Appendix H: Selected Resources Consulted

	Maps
5	1-1 Hudson River Valley Context
7	1-2 Hyde Park Context
47	2-1 Management Zoning
63	2-2 No-Action Alternative
69	2-3 Action Alternative One
75	2-4 Action Alternative Two
104	3-1 FDR Home and Grounds
106	3-2 Historic Roosevelt Family Estate
111	3-3 Val-Kill and Top Cottage
114	3-4 Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site
115	3-5 Vanderbilt Estate
127	3-6 Water Resources
129	3-7 Soils
	Tables
30	1-1 Fundamental Resources, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt NHS
34	1-2 Fundamental Resources, Eleanor Roosevelt NHS
37	1-3 Fundamental Resources, Vanderbilt Mansion NHS
40	1-4 Other Important Resources, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt
76	2-1 Management Objectives and Potential Actions
95	2-2 Comparison of Cost Estimates for the Alternatives
134	3-1 Threatened and Endangered Species
157	3-2 Visitors to Roosevelt-Vanderbilt 2007
158	3-3 Average Spending
158	3-4 Visits and Spending
158	3-5 Visitor Spending by Category
159	3-6 Economic Significance of Visitor Spending, 2007
160	3-7 Economic Impact of Visitor Spending, 2007
173	4-1 Impact Intensities for Cultural Resources
190	4-2 Impact Intensities for Natural Resources
198	4-3 Impact Intensities for Visitor Use and Experience
205	4-4 Impact Intensities for Park Operations and Facilities
214	4-5 Impact Intensities for Socioeconomic Environment
218	4-6 Summary of Impacts—Common to All
222	4-7 Summary of Impacts—No-Action Alternative
224	4-8 Summary of Impacts—Action Alternative One
226	4-9 Summary of Impacts—Action Alternative Two
241	5-1 Summary of Actions Requiring Review under Section 106

Preface

On April 12, 1946, one year after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death, his home in Hyde Park, New York, was opened to the public as a national historic site. The few National Park Service personnel assigned there were hard-pressed to accommodate the streams of visitors who wanted to see the home. Managing these crowds might have been an overwhelming task for this first band of employees, but at least they did not have to worry much about "interpretation"—the Park Service term for explaining the meaning of the park to visitors. The people who waited in line in 1946, and long afterward, needed no explanation of who Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt were, or their place in American history. For many years the American public had been absorbed with the lives of the Roosevelts and, although they often disagreed vehemently about particular policies, to some degree Americans viewed the Roosevelts as part of an extended family.

This remained largely true through Eleanor Roosevelt's lifetime. Since her death in 1962, this familiarity has been steadily disappearing. In 2007 we noted the 125th anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt's birth and the 45th anniversary of Eleanor Roosevelt's death. Each year the number of people who have personal recollection of the Roosevelts' lives diminishes.

Yet FDR took great care to preserve his legacy, and the National Park Service is committed to operating its three historic sites in Hyde Park—Home of FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill, and Vanderbilt Mansion—in perpetuity, as with all units of the National Park System. Even as the Roosevelts recede in memory, the issues they grappled with remain as timely as the latest news. The Roosevelt parks provide a lens through which we can examine political questions that remain vital. Changing conditions call attention to the enduring Roosevelt legacy in unexpected ways, as the economic crisis that began in 2008 reminds us. One of the critical issues facing Park Service managers is how to use park resources to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Roosevelts and Vanderbilts, and their relationship to these places, for generations who have no personal experience with that time.

This is one of several challenges that confront the National Park Service in its management of the three Hyde Park sites, and is among the reasons a new general management plan is needed. Although constructing a management plan

can be a lengthy process, it offers an exceptional opportunity to re-examine the parks from the perspective of greatly changed conditions and to make decisions based on that new information. The plan that follows represents the sustained thought and effort of many people, both in the National Park Service and among members of the public. It is intended to set out a course of action that will convey the importance of these sites to a new audience in a new century.



Dedication, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt
National Historic Site, April 12, 1946

Executive Summary



Visitors in the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center

Introduction

Hyde Park, New York, is home to three national historic sites established by separate legislation: the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site; Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (also known as Val-Kill); and the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. The sites are combined into a single administrative unit, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, under one superintendent and operated by one staff. Together the parks include over 1,100 acres of federally owned land along the east bank of the Hudson River.

Adjacent to the Home of FDR is the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, which occupies nearly 20 acres of historic Roosevelt land. The Presidential Library is administered by a separate entity, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). NARA also owns the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center, which serves as the visitor center for the Presidential Library, as well as the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites.

Purpose of the Plan

The main function of a general management plan is to clearly define a park's purpose and management direction over the long term, 20 years into the future. More detailed technical site plans expand upon the general management plan. The National Park Service seeks to have all parks operate under approved general management plans to ensure that park managers carry out the mission of the National Park Service as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Creating the Plan

This draft general management plan/environmental impact statement for Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites covers the three historic sites in Hyde Park. The draft plan has been created over several years under the guidance of an interdisciplinary team including the Superintendent, park staff, consultants, and NPS regional office staff. During this process, the team has identified issues, described goals, gathered background information, compared similar sites, consulted with partners and resource experts, involved the public, explored solutions, presented management alternatives, and assessed the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives.

At the outset, the team recognized that, although a general management plan was needed for each of the three Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, a single unifying plan was not only the most expeditious approach, but was also essential for continued coordinated management, now necessary in an environment of limited federal funding.

Purpose and Significance of the Parks

The purpose and significance statements, which are based on the authorizing legislation and legislative history, form the foundation of the plan. The purpose statement explains why the park was established as a unit of the national park system, while the significance statement describes the resources from which the park derives its national significance.

Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site

PURPOSE

To preserve and interpret the birthplace, lifelong home, and memorial gravesite of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, so that current and future generations can appreciate the life and legacy of the longest-serving U.S. president—a man who led the nation through the two great crises of the 20th Century, the Great Depression and World War II.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt NHS, together with the adjoining FDR Presidential Library, is the best place to understand the influences that helped shape the personality, values, and world view of the U.S. President who, in a time of deep national crisis, redefined the role of the federal government to provide more security and opportunity for its citizens and who led the nation into an era of profoundly greater involvement in world affairs. The unparalleled assemblage of resources preserved here—the home and birthplace, gravesite, gardens, greenhouses, landscaped grounds, outbuildings, farmland, forests, farm roads, trails, views, furnishings and memorabilia, and the adjacent presidential library and its collections—offers unrivaled insight into the life and legacy of the 32nd U.S. President, who profoundly influenced the world in which we live.



Touring the FDR Home



Girls' Leadership Workshop, a program of The Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site

PURPOSE

To commemorate and perpetuate the lifework of Eleanor Roosevelt, and to preserve and interpret the place most central to her emergence as a public figure, so that current and future generations can appreciate her life and legacy as a champion of democracy and human rights.

SIGNIFICANCE

Eleanor Roosevelt chose Val-Kill for her retreat, her office, her home, and her “laboratory” for social change during the prominent and influential period of her life from 1924 until her death in 1962. During that time she formulated and put into practice her social and political beliefs. This is the place most closely associated with one of the most important public figures of the 20th Century.

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site

PURPOSE

To preserve and interpret the country estate of Frederick W. and Louise Vanderbilt as a premier example of an “American country place,” illustrating important economic, social, and cultural developments resulting from America’s industrialization following the Civil War.

SIGNIFICANCE

Historically known as Hyde Park, the site is a superb example of country-place design, with its centerpiece 50-room Beaux-Arts-style mansion surrounded by one of the most outstanding Hudson River picturesque landscapes remaining today. Developed with one of the country’s first industrial fortunes, the country place represents the domestic ideal of the elite class in late 19th-Century America. It provides a context for studying estate life, the social stratification of the period, and a glimpse into the world of the American elite prior to the Depression and World War II. The property’s legacy as a celebrated landscape was among the factors that prompted FDR to direct the designation of the national historic site in 1940.



Visitors enjoy a concert on the grounds of the Vanderbilt Mansion

Park Partners

Partners play key roles in the operation of the parks, providing advocacy, volunteer workers, and assistance in raising funds. In addition to the FDR Presidential Library and Museum, the NPS has formal agreements with the following partners: The Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill; the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute; Honoring Eleanor Roosevelt: A Project to Preserve Her Val-Kill Home; the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association; the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association; and the Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association, Inc. The National Park Service also provides technical and financial support to the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (established by Congress in 1996) and works with numerous other nonprofit organizations and governmental entities to advance stewardship initiatives.

The Roosevelt–Vanderbilt Stories

Interpretive themes, which help visitors connect with and find meaning in the resources, were developed for each of the historic sites.

Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site

AT HOME ON THE HUDSON RIVER

Franklin D. Roosevelt was deeply rooted in the Hudson River Valley, which had been home to his ancestors since the 17th century. The Roosevelt Family Estate was FDR’s birthplace and lifelong home and became the nucleus of his personal life and public career. The stability and security he experienced here helped mold his responses to both personal challenges and national crises. As a crowning expression of his attachment to his Hyde Park home, FDR chose the family’s Rose Garden as the final resting place for himself and his wife, Eleanor, and designed their plain white marble monument.

A LEADER DURING WORLD CRISES

Elected president in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt led the nation through two great crises of the 20th century, the Great Depression and World War II. During his unprecedented 12 years in office, he redefined the role of the federal government by forging a “New Deal” with the American people through the creation of federal agencies and policies. During World War II, he mobilized America’s vast latent industrial resources and led a coalition of nations to defend democracy against authoritarian regimes. He enunciated the Four Freedoms—freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech and expression, and freedom to worship in one’s own way.

HIS “LABORATORY” FOR IDEAS

The Roosevelt country place in Hyde Park exhibits Franklin D. Roosevelt’s experiments in rural improvement and preserving local heritage. He used his properties to explore and showcase ideas about land stewardship, conservation, and rural life; and he practiced a type of wise-use conservation intended to benefit the land and help sustain the farms and teach sound agricultural practices. These experiments and demonstrations fed into his state and national policies in forestry, agriculture, and the environment. He designed his presidential library and other estate buildings in the traditional Dutch Colonial architectural style of the Hudson River Valley, influencing the design of public structures in Hyde Park and across the country.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT’S LEGACY

In Franklin Roosevelt’s concern for the future of democracy, he championed issues and created programs of enduring relevance to American society, including Social Security, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. He was the first president to intentionally perpetuate a physical legacy by establishing the first presidential library and by donating his home as a national historic site to preserve these resources for future generations.



Children in the Roosevelt Greenhouse



On a tour of Val-Kill Cottage

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S PLACE, VAL-KILL

Val-Kill, Eleanor Roosevelt's home, represents the emergence of her personal and political independence. With the freedom she felt there, Eleanor Roosevelt developed Val-Kill according to her tastes and interests. Its simple and casual décor, in marked contrast to the FDR Home, reflects her personality. Over time, Val-Kill served as a retreat and a center for social activism. Its informal, tranquil atmosphere and rural setting made it a place for Roosevelt family gatherings and meetings with friends and invited guests, from world leaders to students.

ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM

Eleanor Roosevelt championed social welfare and civil rights, first through her husband and later on her own. She supported sometimes controversial causes and interceded with FDR. "I was the agitator, and he was the politician," she said. After FDR's death, as chair of the UN Human Rights Commission, she was instrumental in winning acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. From her home at Val-Kill, she continued to write and teach, and made public appearances on behalf of humanitarian concerns. She especially enjoyed working with disadvantaged young people, and brought many of them to enjoy the relaxing rural atmosphere of Val-Kill.

HER "LABORATORY" FOR IDEAS

Eleanor Roosevelt used Val-Kill to express the interest in education and training that was evident in other portions of her life. With her associates, Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook, she established Val-Kill Industries, a business that produced furniture, metal ware, and fabrics with the aim of training unemployed rural residents to revive traditional crafts. After FDR's death, Eleanor Roosevelt purchased some of the estate for a farming venture, Val-Kill Farms.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S LEGACY

Eleanor Roosevelt's dogged advocacy of human rights and world peace, her firm insistence on social justice, her proud patriotism, and her commitment to individual and government action continue to inspire today. The ideas expressed in the open atmosphere of Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill remain vital to public debate and to the pursuit of democratic ideals. "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places close to home," she wrote in 1958.

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site

WEALTH AND SOCIETY IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site illustrates the rise of American industrial fortunes in the decades following the Civil War, when personal accomplishments, possessions, and philanthropic interests, rather than lineage, came to determine social standing. The Vanderbilt family epitomized this new American class, which looked to the residences of European nobility as inspiration for its grand homes.

A HUDSON RIVER GREAT ESTATE

The national historic site is a premier example of the Hudson River Valley great estates as they flourished before the Depression and World War II. The Valley's extraordinary setting, which has inspired artists and authors, as well as architects, landscape designers, and conservationists, distinguishes the stately homes here from similar properties elsewhere. Comparing the Vanderbilt estate and the Roosevelt estate can reveal important differences in the lifestyles and tastes of the occupants.

A LEGACY OF THE PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE

The Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site retains a designed landscape developed and adapted over the course of two centuries by several designers. Beginning in the 1790s, successive owners conducted horticultural experiments and extensive gardening. Around 1830, the Belgian landscape designer Andre Parmentier was hired to lay out a picturesque landscape including a system of roads, paths, and scenic vistas. Frederick and Louise Vanderbilt enhanced the features and grounds of the estate, which included an Italian garden and, during much of its history, a working farm.

PATRONAGE AND THE FLOWERING OF ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT

Frederick and Louise Vanderbilt acquired the Hyde Park estate during an era of remarkable artistic creativity and patronage in the United States, and they enlisted an army of professionals to create a place that would imitate and rival the palatial houses of Europe. The Vanderbilt Mansion came to exemplify the American Renaissance style and to embody the Vanderbilt family's role as modern "merchant princes" at the vanguard of finance, the arts, and international society.

Developing New Directions

The planning team developed management alternatives in response to public input and an analysis of the parks' legislation, purpose and significance, fundamental resources, and goals. After examining this information, the team identified several subject areas for which visions for the future of the parks could differ substantially, given factors introduced since the parks' creation, and planning issues identified by stakeholders. The team defined and applied three broad questions, or "decision points," around which they structured the management approaches.

1. What level and extent of resource preservation treatment is desirable and appropriate to portray the historic conditions of the properties?

The historic properties have changed since the Roosevelt and the Vanderbilt families lived here. They are no longer working farms and forests. Acres of agricultural lands have become obscured by woody growth. Forest plantations, left unmanaged, are becoming unrecognizable as such. Gardens have been altered or completely removed. Some estate support buildings have been lost due to poor repair; others are being compromised by inappropriate uses. Prized Hudson River views are becoming increasingly obstructed by tree growth on parklands and further threatened by development pressures across



At the Vanderbilt Overlook

the river. Continued suburban-type development, already evident when the existing plans were formed, has further separated the parks from their surroundings in a way that was not foreseen when the sites were established.

2. What should the parks be doing to maintain or build visitation and attract new audiences, and how can they best interpret these historic sites to generations that lack personal experience with the period?

As at many other historic sites, the number of visitors has decreased in recent decades, with the greatest declines at the Roosevelt sites. In addition, visitors do not reflect the ethnic, racial, or socio-economic diversity that now characterizes the U.S. population. While the new Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center, with its film and exhibits, and the new Eleanor Roosevelt film and exhibits at Val-Kill provide exciting and essential additions to visitor introduction and orientation, the National Park Service's method of presenting the parks has changed little since the parks' establishment. The historic residences continue to be the focus of interpretation, to the neglect of other important structures and cultural landscapes and their stories. In addition, it is possible to further develop the parks' educational programming, which at present focuses on the Home of FDR, with far fewer programs offered at Val-Kill and Vanderbilt. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of students take house tours, as opposed to participatory programs.

3. How can the parks work with partners to garner resources to enhance capacity for operations and services?

As at many other NPS sites, the condition of key park resources is in decline, as there is a critical backlog of maintenance and preservation projects and limited staffing with which to conduct site operations and manage repairs. While modest increases have been made to the park budget in the past few years, they are insufficient to overcome shortfalls accruing over several decades from rising fixed costs, such as employee cost-of-living adjustments, retirement and health insurance benefits, and utility costs; and the increasing costs of delaying deferred maintenance and preservation. This poses a general threat to the long-term preservation of the sites' resources. Increasingly, park managers are seeking opportunities to involve partners in the accomplishment of the parks' missions.

The Management Alternatives

The team developed two "action alternatives" and, as required by law and policy, an alternative that represents a continuation of current management practices, the "No-Action Alternative." The two action alternatives differ in terms of resource preservation, primarily in the realm of cultural landscape treatment; in interpretive and educational services; and in the level of partnership activities to help enhance operational capacity. Action Alternative Two has been identified as the preferred alternative.

The alternatives are general and set the direction for future actions. When funds become available to construct facilities, undertake landscape treatment, or implement other actions in the general management plan, then site-specific

research, planning, design, compliance, and technical environmental analysis will be carried out. All such undertakings will also be subject to federal and state consultation and compliance requirements.

Implementation of the final plan will depend upon the availability of funds. Proposed construction projects must compete for funds through the National Park Service's priority-setting process.

No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative represents a continuation of current management practices at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. It allows projects to be completed for which funding has been secured or for which environmental compliance has been fulfilled, but does not allow for major changes in direction. The No-Action Alternative is presented to help compare current practices to the other alternatives. Examining the projected results of continuing current practices is useful for understanding why certain changes are necessary or advisable.

Action Alternative One

Action Alternative One perpetuates the general philosophy and direction of the existing management plans but updates them to address changed conditions, additions to the parks, and increased knowledge of park resources gathered in the intervening years. Proposed resource management efforts would focus on the landscape and be aimed at restoring the historic appearance of resources to the fullest extent possible within select areas. The reconstruction or replacement of missing landscape features would be encouraged in core areas. Modern intrusions would be minimized, and this alternative would limit the addition of features or facilities that were not present during the periods of historic significance. The main residences would continue to be presented as historic house museums, with a greater number of historic outbuildings opened for interpretation than at present.

Efforts to maintain and increase the level of visitation would center on expanding the tour options available and strengthening educational programming. Interpretation would focus on describing historic conditions and encouraging visitors to explore not only the historic residences, but the entirety of the estates through a range of guided and self-guided tours. Educational programming would be strengthened and would concentrate on curriculum-based, after-school, and other types of children's programs.

This alternative would rely on enhanced partnerships to accomplish its vision. Coordination with partners would focus on increasing access and awareness of the sites, enhancing interpretive programming, and assisting with resource preservation efforts.

Highlights of Action Alternative One:

Aims to restore an accurate historic appearance in key areas:

- Forest plantations and natural woodlands would be actively managed to restore historic character
- Former farm fields would be returned to their historic extent and maintained as open meadow



FDR Home, Library, and grounds, circa 1941

- Restoration of designed landscapes—FDR Home Garden, Eleanor Roosevelt Cutting Garden, and Vanderbilt formal gardens—would concentrate on historic core areas
- Hudson River views would be restored to their historic extent

More tour options would be offered and educational programs enhanced:

- Regularly scheduled guided tours of gardens and grounds would be offered
- New media would be developed for self-guided interpretation
- There would be an increased focus on interpretation of outbuildings, for example the Vanderbilt Coach House would be open to the public, restored, and interpreted
- Children's educational programming would be enhanced with additional teaching space, staff support, and interactive programming

Partners and volunteers would provide increased assistance with maintenance and programming:

- Partners and volunteers would assist with maintenance of forests and gardens
- More volunteer docents would be trained and aid NPS staff in giving tours and educational programs



Enjoying the grounds at Vanderbilt

Action Alternative Two (The Preferred Alternative)

Action Alternative Two seeks to make the parks relevant to more audiences by encouraging greater civic participation in park activities, while significantly enhancing the historic character of park resources. These efforts would be in keeping with the historic residents' use of the land for outdoor enjoyment and resource stewardship. Proposed resource management efforts would focus on the landscape and be aimed at rehabilitating existing features, but would follow contemporary best practices for land management within select areas. Resource management decisions would be guided to a greater extent by programmatic needs, especially interpretation. The reconstruction of missing landscape features would be limited; generally they would be represented by new features of similar massing and scale, or through interpretive media. Construction of new trail segments to support visitor access would be allowed. The main residences would continue to be presented as historic house museums, with select historic outbuildings adaptively re-used for NPS or partner programs.

Efforts to build and maintain visitation would focus on providing a wide range of activities, including recreational activities, special events, and programs to reach varied audiences. While interpretation would be place-based, it would more deliberately use resources to explore issues of contemporary relevance. A learning center would be established to expand the scope and magnitude of the educational programs. Creation and presentation of these new programs would depend largely on partners, with some NPS employees functioning more as coordinators and facilitators than at present.

This alternative calls for a significant expansion of partnership activities in the management and operation of the sites and opens up greater potential for new approaches to generating revenue to help sustain and improve operations.

Highlights of Action Alternative Two:

Rehabilitates cultural resources to enhance the historic character of estates and continues historic land uses with allowances for contemporary practices:

- Forests would be actively managed; treatments would range from managing for historic character to using latest forestry practices
- Historic fields would be reclaimed and farming reintroduced, with contemporary practices allowed
- Designed landscapes would be rehabilitated and missing features indicated via media or elements of similar massing/scale, for example, a community “Victory Garden” could be developed on the FDR Home Garden site
- The Hudson River view would be expanded at the Home of FDR, with action taken to preserve the view at Vanderbilt

With partners, a wider choice of visitor experiences would be offered to reach more audiences:

- Forestry and farming demonstrations and special events would be developed
- A place-based learning center, serving preschoolers to retirees, would be established
- Changing exhibits/forums that explore the contemporary relevance of site stories would be pursued
- Compatible recreational use of trails would be promoted with multi-use trail links among the sites
- River connections would be improved at Roosevelt Cove and Bard Rock

Significantly increased partner participation would help maintain resources, run programs, and generate revenue:

- Partners would be sought for a compatible public use of the Vanderbilt Coach House to offset maintenance costs
- Partnerships would be developed to operate the learning center and conduct demonstrations, special programs, and recreation-based tours
- New sources of revenue would be evaluated and implemented with partner participation, such as the development and sale of branded products

Common to All Alternatives

Regardless of which alternative is chosen, particular management objectives would be pursued. For example, park managers would make preservation and maintenance of park resources a priority in implementation of any alternative, with addressing the maintenance backlog the top priority. The historic residences—FDR Home, Val-Kill Cottage, and Vanderbilt Mansion—would continue



Teaching the Hudson Valley program

to be presented as fully furnished historic house museums. Park managers would strive to preserve the collections in good condition to support programs and interpretive themes, with original and associated collections acquired when available. Important natural communities, such as freshwater tidal marsh, mature forest stands, and habitat for the Blanding's turtle, would be preserved and enhanced when possible. Maintenance facilities would be relocated from historic buildings to a new structure, possibly outside park boundaries. The Bellefield property would remain the park headquarters but would be updated for efficiency. Steps would be taken to achieve energy efficiency, establish sustainable practices, and promote car-free access to the parks. Park managers would continue to work with partners to promote stewardship and work to protect the sweeping views of the Hudson Valley, the parks' historic setting, and reestablish the rural character of the Route 9 and Route 9G corridors to the extent practicable.

Why Action Alternative Two is Preferred

NPS has identified Action Alternative Two as the preferred alternative because it offers a greater possibility of benefits than the other alternatives. Its proposed greater reliance on partnerships and new sources of revenue would free park employees and funding to focus on management to a greater degree than the other alternatives. As the experience of the last several decades indicates, reliance on a high level of government support over the long term for operations and services (as proposed by the other alternatives), even augmented with strong volunteer support, may not be a sustainable management approach. Therefore, the integration of partners in many levels of operations and services, as proposed in Action Alternative Two, may facilitate better resource preservation and stewardship over the long term.

By allowing greater flexibility in resource treatment and relying more on perpetuating historic land uses, as opposed to strictly seeking to re-establish historic appearance, Action Alternative Two presents an approach to landscape management that is more practical, cost-effective, and sustainable over the long term, and thus more likely to succeed in preserving resources.

By encouraging more diverse interpretation, Action Alternative Two is the most likely to halt or even reverse the long-term decline in visitation. Making the parks more lively places, promoting compatible recreational use, and interpreting the parks to demonstrate their relevance to contemporary concerns should increase the qualitative benefits of the parks, as well as stimulating greater and more varied use by the American public. Similarly, the greater scope of education under Action Alternative Two may more effectively renew interest in the parks and motivate new park stewards.

The emphasis in Action Alternative Two on partnerships and innovative programs should increase community involvement in the parks, which would support both preservation and a compatible diversity of uses. Moreover, it echoes to a greater degree than the other alternatives the Roosevelts' ideals of active participation in government and civic life.

Potential Environmental Impacts

An analysis of the potential environmental impacts of each alternative is included in the draft environmental impact statement. Potential impacts on cultural resources, natural resources, visitor use and experience, park operations, and the socio-economic environment were considered in the environmental analysis. Overall, Action Alternative Two provided more beneficial impacts than the other alternatives and has been identified as the “environmentally preferred alternative,” as well as the agency preferred alternative.

Next Steps

The draft general management plan/draft environmental impact statement is available for public review for 60 days. During this time, the team will solicit public comment and hold public forums that will be publicized in local media outlets. The planning team will carefully review the comments received and develop responses to all substantive comments in a final general management plan/final environmental impact statement. After a 30-day “no-action” period, a Record of Decision will be prepared to document the selected management option and set forth any stipulations for implementation of the general management plan, thus completing the environmental compliance requirements.

A Note about Implementation

Implementation of the approved plan will depend on the availability of future NPS funding, on NPS service-wide priorities, and on partner funds, time, and effort. The approval of a general management plan does not guarantee that funding and staffing to implement the plan will be forthcoming. Full implementation of the plan could be realized many years in the future.