



Raise and Rehabilitate the Seawalls at Castillo de San Marcos



This image shows an aerial view of Castillo de San Marcos National Monument Fort, grounds, and seawall, looking from the water side to the west.

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a project to raise and rehabilitate the failing seawalls at the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument. Funded by the 2023 Disaster Supplement funding, this project aims to repair damage from storm events and enhance resiliency to improve safety, optimize guest experience, while minimizing impacts to natural and cultural resources. The NPS is inviting public comment on this project between June 17- July 17, 2024.

Civic Engagement

Public Meeting June 25th at 6pm-8pm ET
At the Renaissance St. Augustine Historic Downtown
Hotel, 6 West Castillo Dr., St. Augustine, FL 32084

You can also attend the first part of the meeting virtually
via Zoom Meeting ID: 845 6859 4848, Passcode: 697198

The next public meeting will be held in September 2024.

Public Comment Period is open through June 17- July 17th

Attend our meetings virtually or in-person or find more
information and provide written comments on the NPS Planning
Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website at:
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectId=102296>

Comments post marked no later than July 17, 2024 can be
mailed to Superintendent Gordie Wilson
Attn: Castillo de San Marcos Raise and Rehabilitation Project
1 South Castillo Drive
St Augustine, FL 32084

Please note before including your address, telephone number, electronic mail address, or other personally identifiable information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personally identifiable information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personally identifiable information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Overview

Castillo de San Marcos, a unit of the National Park Service, has stood for more than 350 years, serving as a cornerstone of the St. Augustine community. Built by the Spanish in 1672 in St. Augustine to defend Florida and the Atlantic trade route, Castillo de San Marcos National Monument preserves the oldest masonry fortification in the continental United States and interprets more than 350 years of cultural intersections. To learn more about the rich history, please visit:

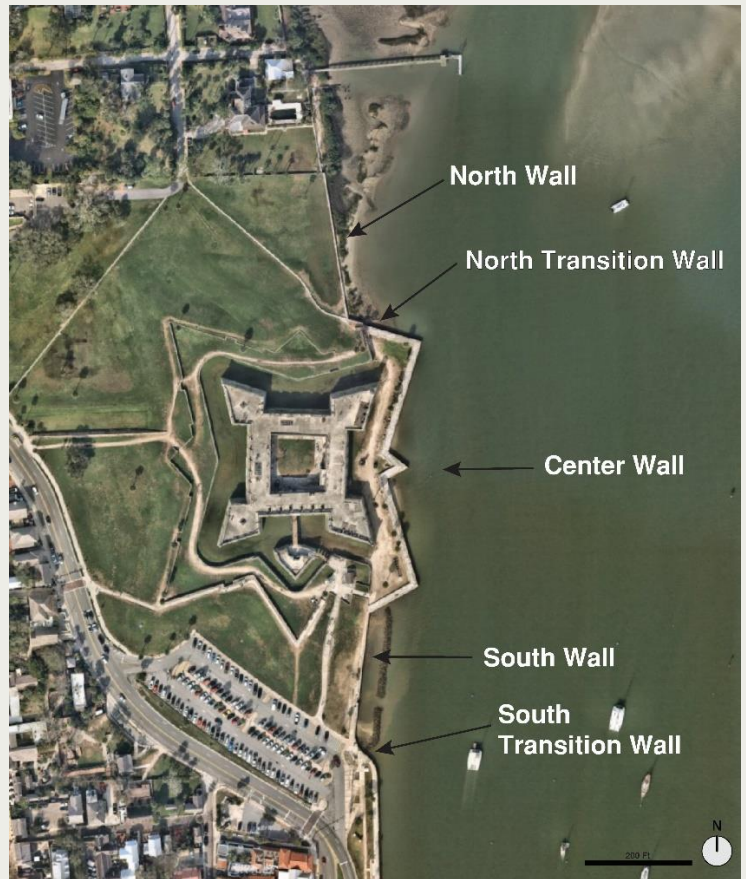
<https://www.nps.gov/casa/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

Like the Castillo, the seawalls are constructed of coquina, which is a stone formed from shells. Coquina was widely available in St. Augustine and believed to be a more suitable material for the fort than wood because it would not burn and could absorb cannonball fire. However, coquina is porous and not very durable which has led to substantial subsidence and erosion of the seawalls over time. Not only are the seawalls degrading, but they are also the lowest elevation of the City's seawall network, making the Castillo the first area to flood during storm events. Its low elevation, worsened by substantial subsidence, and the overall degradation of the seawall over time has left it in need of repair.

The historic seawall can be characterized by five sections: North, North Transition, Center, South, and South Transition Seawalls. Each section of seawall was constructed at different times with different materials and methods, which will require differing rehabilitation needs.

The need for the project is to address structural integrity issues at the seawall, including effects of aging, erosion, storm damage and flooding, as well as mitigate the impacts of sea level rise by raising the seawall elevations. By raising and repairing the seawalls, this project aims to not only protect the historic and cultural resources of the Park, but also aid in flood prevention and resiliency for the City of St. Augustine and its Historic Downtown District.

Funding from the 2023 Disaster Supplement bill is part of a concerted effort to help parks affected by recent natural disasters. The funding is intended to cover the costs of repairing and rebuilding ecosystems, infrastructure, and historically significant structures. It also aims to provide resiliency funds to better protect national park sites and communities, and to ensure that national parks are built to withstand future storms.



This image shows an aerial orthogonal view of Castillo de San Marcos National Monument Fort, grounds, and seawall. The five wall sections are labeled from North to South as: North Wall, North Transition Wall, Center Wall, South Wall, and South Transition Wall.

Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires all federal agencies to consider and document the potential impacts of management actions on the environment. The National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 directs NPS to both conserve park resources and provide for their use and enjoyment. Both Acts are used by NPS to plan and make informed decisions that help protect park resources and values. During the planning process, members of the public and agencies have the opportunity to provide input on issues, concerns, or opportunities related to the proposed project. Following the civic engagement period, this input, along with data gathering and facilities assessments, will be used to inform the design of infrastructure improvements and documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA). An EA is a NEPA document that evaluates the likely environmental consequences resulting from a proposed action. The EA will address the project background, the purpose and need for the proposed project, and the alternatives considered. The EA will also document the existing environmental conditions and potential impacts of implementing those actions carried forward for further review. The draft design plans and the EA will be presented for public review and comment. The EA is anticipated to be available for review in Winter 2024.