

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site
Alabama**



General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement

Record of Decision

Approved:

Date:

For David Vela
Southeast Regional Director
National Park Service

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECORD OF DECISION

**GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site
Alabama**

The Department of the Interior (DOI), National Park Service (NPS), has prepared this Record of Decision (ROD) on the General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) for Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site (NHS). This ROD includes the following items: a description of the project's background, a decision statement, synopses of other alternatives considered, the basis for the final decision, findings on any impairment of the site's resources and values, a description of the environmentally preferable alternative, and an overview of public and agency involvement in the planning process.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the GMP is to provide a comprehensive direction for resource preservation and visitor use and a foundation for decision making for the park for the next 15 to 20 years. The plan prescribes the resource conditions and visitor experiences that are to be achieved and maintained in the park over time. The clarification of what must be achieved according to law and policy is based on a review of the park's purpose, significance, and special mandates.

Direct legislative mandates were put into place when Congress established this Site. Congress has placed an obligation upon the NPS to implement the operational and developmental components of the historic site with minimal deviation from conditions described in the special resource study (SRS). Because the level of site development detail provided in the SRS far exceeds what would typically be provided in a GMP, the NPS concluded that a development concept plan (DCP) could be satisfactorily produced based solely on the guidance provided in the site's legislative mandates. Therefore, a DCP was completed in April 2005 to implement the operational and developmental components of the SRS.

The following list includes references to some of the more relevant direct legislative mandates in the enabling legislation:

- NPS will consult with Tuskegee University as its principal partner in determining the organizational structure, developing the ongoing interpretive themes, and establishing policies for the wise management, use, and development of the historic site. (§303-d-2)
- Operation and development of the historic site shall reflect the alternative entitled, "Living History: The Tuskegee Airmen Experience", as expressed in the SRS entitled "Moton Field/Tuskegee Airmen Special Resource Study," dated 1998. (§303-d-4)
- Subsequent development of the historic site shall reflect the alternative entitled, "Legacy: Tuskegee Airmen National Center, A Historical Continuum", as expressed in the SRS after an agreement is reached with Tuskegee University on the development of the Tuskegee Airmen National Center (TANC) as described in section 304. (§303-d-4)

- The purpose of the TANC shall be to extend the ability to relate more fully the story of the Tuskegee Airmen at Moton Field. The center shall provide for a Tuskegee Airmen Memorial, shall provide large exhibit space for the display of period aircraft and equipment used by the Tuskegee Airmen, and shall house a Tuskegee University Department of Aviation Science. The Secretary shall insure that interpretive programs for visitors benefit from the University's active pilot training instruction program, and the historical continuum of flight training in the tradition of the Tuskegee Airmen. (§304-b)
- The Secretary is authorized to permit the Tuskegee University Department of Aviation Science to occupy historic buildings within the Moton Field complex until the TANC has been completed. (§304-b)

By incorporating the SRS into the park's enabling legislation, Congress changed the fundamental intent of the document from an information and analysis reference to a decision-making tool. As a result, the alternatives considered in all subsequent plans at Tuskegee Airmen NHS must, by law and NPS policy, fall within the narrow parameters established by the SRS. The highly detailed instructions about site development in the SRS greatly exceed what would normally be provided in a GMP. The functionality, location, design intent, and visitor experience of operational and developmental components of the SRS are legislative mandates. Consequently, the GMP aims to ensure that the requirements of the enabling legislation are implemented. Among other things, a central principle of the GMP is the need for it to complement the DCP now being implemented at the park and to support the long-term preservation of the historic landscape (buildings, grounds, and related features) as it appeared in the historic period from 1941 to 1945.

DECISION (SELECTED ACTION)

The preferred alternative (selected action, Alternative D) in the GMP/EIS provides for a diversity of visitor interpretive programs and recreational opportunities. This alternative complements the ongoing legislatively mandated rehabilitation work in the core historic area as per the SRS and DCP by placing the area in the Historic 1945 Zone. This zone allows the mandated work to continue uninterrupted as per the SRS and DCP. The selected action of the GMP does not interfere with ongoing mandated actions or recommend any other actions in the core historic area other than those mandated in the SRS and DCP. No additional facilities are proposed within the core historic area beyond those that are identified in the DCP. New actions recommended by the GMP's Alternative D focus on areas outside the core historic area and the scope of the SRS and DCP.

Portions of the Tuskegee University owned property are zoned for recreational purposes. This zone would allow low impact recreational activities and interpretive program topics that broaden out beyond the Tuskegee Airmen story. Visitor use would be predominantly self-guided. Activities could include hiking, walking, nature viewing, picnicking, and similar outdoor recreation endeavors. The Tuskegee University owned property also has areas zoned for nature discovery. These areas would provide for a degree of quiet and solitude not found elsewhere on the site. Visitors could participate in activities such as viewing cultural resources, hiking, self-guided tours, nature viewing, and research.

Administration Zones are provided in two areas. There is an area along Chappie James Avenue and an area east of the hangars that extends to the park boundary. Pursuant to the General Management Planning Dynamic Sourcebook, March 2008, providing two zones would allow greater management flexibility in the future for determining the most appropriate location for administration and maintenance facilities as compared to the other action alternatives. The area adjacent to the hangars could be accessed through the Historic 1945 Zone via the historic entrance road or via the Nature Discovery Zone (unpaved road surface). A vehicle maintenance/storage shed would be constructed in one of the areas.

The Visitor Orientation Zone is essentially the same in each of the action alternatives. This area includes ample parking and picnic areas. The visitor contact station is located within this zone as well as an overlook area for viewing the core historic area.

Alternative D provides for additional interpretive, educational, and recreational opportunities with new facilities including natural trails, hardened trails, wayside exhibits, kiosks, a small group program area, picnic areas, and parking.

The preferred alternative incorporates five management zones, and provides for protection of resources while increasing recreational access. Each of the five management zones is briefly described in the paragraphs that follow.

Historic 1945 Zone – In this zone visitor experiences would include viewing cultural resources, guided tours, viewing programs, and interacting with people in period dress. The types of development that a typical visitor would expect to find are restored structures, parking areas, roads, trails, visitor center, exhibit areas, group program areas, waysides/kiosks, and concessions.

Visitor Orientation Zone – This zone would provide visitors with an orientation to the park. Other activities for visitors include viewing cultural resources, engaging in self-guided tours, viewing programs, and picnicking. The types of development that a typical visitor would expect to find are contact stations, memorials, parking areas, roads, trails, exhibit areas, group shelters, and picnic areas.

Administration Zone – Visitors typically do not enter this zone except to conduct research or for official business. Facilities and development could include offices, maintenance buildings, storage facilities, libraries, emergency services, and parking areas.

Recreation Zone – This zone would provide visitors with such activities as hiking, picnicking, nature viewing, park orientation, and viewing programs. Within this zone, the visitor experience is less structured and visitors are able to explore on their own. The facilities that visitors would have access to in this zone could include a contact station, waysides/kiosks, hardened and natural trails, parking areas, picnic areas, and group program areas.

Nature Discovery Zone – The emphasis in this zone would be focused on restoring and preserving resources, education, and outreach to visitors. Visitors would be able to have a quiet, solitary experience while participating in activities such as viewing cultural resources, hiking, self-guided tours, nature viewing, and research. The types of facilities in this zone could include natural surfaced trails, unpaved roads, waysides/kiosks, and benches.

Mitigation Measures / Monitoring

Efforts would be made to avoid adverse impacts to cultural resources by identifying historic properties prior to an undertaking, avoiding effects to historic properties where possible, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation and by using visual screens and/or sensitive designs that are compatible with historic resources. Studies carried out in advance of undertakings to identify historic properties and assess effects will comply with the requirements of Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 36 CFR 60, 36 CFR 800, and *DOI Director's Order-28 and 28A: Archeology*. Mitigation measures, developed in consultation with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer (GSHPO), may include data recovery of identified National Register (NR) eligible archeological sites and documentation of built resources in accordance with Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record standards. If, during construction, any previously unknown archeological resources are discovered, all work in the immediate

vicinity of the discovery would be halted until the resources could be identified and documented, and an appropriate mitigation strategy developed in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.13.

Measures to be taken to protect natural and cultural resources include siting new facilities in previously disturbed areas while also avoiding sensitive resources whenever feasible. Construction zones would be identified and fenced with temporary fencing or a similar material prior to any construction activity. The fencing would define the construction zone and confine activity to the minimum area required. All protection measures would be clearly stated in construction specifications, and workers would be instructed to avoid areas beyond the fencing. Measures to control dust and erosion during construction would be identified and could include the following: watering dry soils; using silt fences and sedimentation controls; stabilizing soils during and after construction with specially designed fabrics, certified straw, or other materials; and covering haul trucks. Following completion of construction activities, all areas of disturbed soils and vegetation would be re-graded and re-vegetated as soon as possible. Natural topographic features would be restored to the extent possible using excavated soils from other park projects, and native species would be used in all re-vegetation efforts. Restoration efforts would be maximized by using salvaged topsoil and native vegetation and by monitoring re-vegetation success for several growing seasons as appropriate. Undesirable species would be monitored and control strategies initiated if needed.

Mitigation measures would also be taken prior to construction to minimize immediate and long-term impacts to rare, threatened, and endangered species. Surveys would be conducted prior to construction to determine whether these species are present on a particular site. Facilities would be sited and designed to avoid adverse effects whenever possible. If avoidance were not feasible, adverse effects would be minimized and compensated for, as appropriate, and in consultation with appropriate resource agencies. Standard noise abatement measures would be implemented during park operations and construction activities. These measures could include scheduling activities to minimize impacts, use of the best available noise control techniques, use of hydraulically or electrically powered tools, and keeping construction activities at the proper distance from sensitive uses or resources.

Future planning efforts addressing cultural resources would include other more detailed studies and plans such as a Cultural Landscape Inventory, Cultural Landscape Report, Archeological Overview and Assessment, and a Cultural Affiliation Study. A resource stewardship strategy would address both cultural and natural resources and provide details on the strategies and actions necessary to address the park's most important resource management problems and research needs. The long-range strategies will integrate the best available science and prescribe inventories, research, monitoring, restoration, mitigation measures, resource protection measures, education, and management of resource uses. Other future planning efforts could include an Off-road Vehicle Plan, Trail Management Plan, Alternative Transportation Plan, and Fire Management Plan.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative A. Alternative A is the no action alternative. National Environmental Policy Act guidelines require an assessment of the impacts of the no action alternative, which is defined as a continuation of current park management practices into the future. The no action alternative is used as a way to evaluate the effects of the other four action alternatives and is useful in understanding why changes for the future management of the park are necessary. Under Alternative A, the park would continue its management practices at the current authorized levels of enforcement, resource management, and education and interpretation. The park's enabling legislation and the DCP would be the long-term documents to guide the management and development of the NHS under Alternative A. Historic resources and visitor facilities would be provided for and maintained in accordance with the DCP.

Alternative B. Alternative B would emphasize the natural environment by keeping Tuskegee Airmen NHS largely undeveloped and natural in character outside of the core historic and visitor areas. As in the selected action, this alternative complements the ongoing legislatively mandated rehabilitation work in the core historic area. No additional facilities are proposed within the core historic area beyond those that are identified in the DCP and that area has been zoned to allow for broad restoration and interpretive programs related to the Tuskegee Airmen story.

The majority of the Tuskegee University owned property and the areas adjacent to the historic entrance road are zoned as natural discovery areas. These areas would provide for a degree of quiet and solitude. Visitors could participate in activities such as viewing cultural resources, hiking, self-guided tours, nature viewing, and research.

One Administration Zone is provided along Chappie James Avenue. A vehicle maintenance/storage shed could be constructed in this area and other administrative functions could occur here without disruption to visitors. In this alternative, the Recreation Zone is not used.

Alternative C. Alternative C places large areas of the NPS owned property in the Historic 1945 Zone, allowing for the restoration of resources to the 1941-1945 historic period of significance. The core historic area is the largest of all the alternatives, allowing for the broadest restoration and interpretive programs related to the Tuskegee Airmen story.

The majority of the Tuskegee University owned property is zoned as a natural discovery area. This area would provide for a degree of quiet and solitude. Visitors could participate in activities such as viewing cultural resources, hiking, self-guided tours, nature viewing, and research.

As in Alternative B, one Administration Zone is provided along Chappie James Avenue. A vehicle maintenance/storage shed could be constructed in this area and other administrative functions could occur here without disruption to visitors. In this alternative, the Recreation Zone is not used.

Alternative E. Alternative E places large areas of the NPS owned property in the Historic 1945 Zone, allowing for the restoration of resources to the 1941-1945 historic period of significance and allowing for broad restoration and interpretive programs related to the Tuskegee Airmen story.

The majority of the Tuskegee University owned property is zoned for recreation. This area would provide visitors with such activities as hiking, picnicking, nature viewing, park orientation, and viewing programs. Within this zone, the visitor experience is less structured and visitors are able to explore on their own. The facilities that visitors would have access to in this zone could include a contact station, waysides/kiosks, hardened and natural trails, parking areas, picnic areas, and group program areas.

One Administration Zone is provided in an area east of the hangars that extends to the park boundary. This area could be accessed through the Historic 1945 Zone via the historic entrance road or via the

Recreation Zone. A vehicle maintenance/storage shed could be constructed in this area and administrative functions would take place here. In this alternative, the Nature Discovery Zone is not used.

BASIS FOR DECISION

The proposed action, Alternative D, was selected using the Choosing by Advantages process. Alternative D best balances the park's need to provide high-quality visitor experiences and protect park resources. This alternative addresses public comments and concerns received, as summarized in the section entitled, Public and Agency Involvement. Alternative D, the preferred alternative, would provide the greatest total advantage of the five alternatives.

For each of the five alternatives under consideration, including the no-action alternative, the planning team discussed the alternatives for each factor and reached a consensus regarding how each factor should be characterized. The following is a list of the factors, which the team used as a basis for discussion.

1. Extent to which alternative preserves and/or restores natural environment.
2. Extent to which cultural landscape is restored and non-historic features (Visitor contact station, benches, kiosks, etc.) are kept out of the cultural landscape.
3. Potential for solitary experiences.
4. Potential for a variety of recreational opportunities.
5. Potential for interpretive and educational opportunities (in addition to those provided in core historic areas).
6. Potential for visitor services and facilities (in addition to those provided in core historic areas).
7. Potential for operational efficiency.
8. Potential for protecting public and employee health, safety, and welfare.

FINDINGS ON IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES AND VALUES

The NPS may not allow the impairment of park resources and values unless directly and specifically provided for by legislation or proclamation establishing the park. Impairment that is prohibited by the NPS Organic Act and the General Authorities Act is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. In determining whether impairment would occur, park managers examine the duration, severity and magnitude of the impact; the resources and values affected; and direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the action. According to NPS Management Policies 2006 (1.4.5), "an impact would be more likely to constitute an impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is (a) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park; (b) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or (c) identified as being of significance in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents."

As described in the mitigation section, all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental effects from the selected alternative have been adopted. Because there would be no major adverse impacts to resources whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes in the establishing legislation or proclamation for the CRNRA; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or (3) identified as a goal in relevant DOI planning documents, there would be no impairment of the park's resources or values. After a review of these potential effects, the DOI has determined that the alternative selected for implementation will not impair park resources or values and will not violate the NPS Organic Act.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which is guided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The CEQ provides direction that "the environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA §101: (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradations, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and variety, of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources."

Alternative D is the environmentally preferred alternative in its ability to best meet the six national environmental criteria as described below.

Three of the above criteria did not make a difference in determining the environmentally preferred alternative. Criterion 1 is satisfied by all of the alternatives. Tuskegee Airmen NHS is a unit of the National Park System and as the trustee of this site; the NPS would continue to fulfill its obligation to protect this area for future generations. All the alternatives would fulfill criterion 2, ensuring safe, healthful, productive, and culturally pleasing surroundings for all Americans. Criterion 6 is to enhance the quality of renewable resources and maximize the recycling of depletable resources. All of the alternatives would result in enhancing the quality of the renewable resources through NPS management. The environmentally preferable alternative for the Tuskegee Airmen NHS's GMP/EIS is Alternative D, the preferred alternative by the NPS. Alternative D would surpass the other alternatives in realizing the full range of national environmental policy goals as described in section 101. In particular, the preferred alternative attains the widest range of beneficial uses without degradation (criterion 3); preserves natural and cultural resources while providing a diversity and a variety of individual choices (criterion 4); and achieves a balance between population and resource use (criterion 5). Alternatives A, B, and C are similar to Alternative D in their provisions for balance of population and resource use, however, they would not provide the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment and an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choices. Thus, Alternatives A, B, and C would not meet policy goals 3 and 4 as well as Alternative D. Alternative E would similarly protect resources, as do Alternatives A, B, and C. However, Alternative E would not achieve a balance between population and resource use (criterion 5) as well as Alternative D.

Therefore, Alternative D was chosen as the environmentally preferred alternative because the balance of resource protection and the improvements to the visitor experience fully meets the goals of the NEPA.

PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The NPS initially started the planning processes for a DCP and a GMP simultaneously with the goal of coordinating and completing the two plans together. The primary reason for this dual planning process was Congress' mandate to implement the operational and developmental components of the historic site with minimal deviation from conditions described in Alternatives C and D in the SRS. Furthermore, because the level of site development detail provided in the SRS far exceeds what would typically be provided in a GMP, the NPS concluded that a DCP could be satisfactorily produced based solely on the guidance provided in the park's legislative mandates.

Public meetings and newsletters were used to keep the public informed and involved in the planning process. A mailing list was compiled that consisted of members of governmental agencies, organizations, businesses, legislators, local governments, and interested citizens. The Tuskegee Airmen, Inc, which is a national organization with 49 chapters throughout the U.S., was kept apprised of the GMP's progress throughout the process and their input was requested.

The public involvement process began with a notice of intent to prepare the GMP / EIS that was published in the Federal Register on February 25, 2004. The first newsletter, issued in July 2004, described the planning effort and solicited public input. Scoping meetings with stakeholders and the public were held in July 2004 in Tuskegee. The NPS received comments in the meetings and in response to the first newsletter. Those who commented emphasized that the historic core of Moton Field should maintain its 1945 appearance. It was also suggested that it would be nice if recreational activities could be accommodated outdoors within the boundary. These comments were taken into consideration when deciding on issues for the plan to address.

A second newsletter distributed in November 2006 described the preliminary alternative concepts for managing the NHS. After the newsletter was mailed, public meetings were held in Tuskegee to obtain additional public comment on the preliminary alternatives. Public comments in response to the newsletter and meetings were mostly "votes" for one alternative or another and were not substantive comments requiring responses.

Agency and American Indian Consultation and Coordination

In accordance with 36 CFR 800 and the Programmatic Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, and the DOI, a letter was sent to the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office and to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to initiate consultation. The letters invited them to participate in the planning process and informed them that the NPS plans to use this EIS to fulfill the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as well as comply with provisions of NEPA.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), the NPS contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by letter to initiate consultation and to ask for a list of threatened and endangered species, critical habitats, and species of concern.

Consultation letters were also sent to the Environmental Protection Agency (Region 4), the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Federal Aviation Administration. In addition, letters were sent to federally recognized American Indian Tribes with ancestral lands in Alabama requesting feedback concerning the GMP.

All agencies mentioned above were notified of the GMP progress throughout the planning process.

CONCLUSION

Among the alternatives considered, the selected alternative best protects the diversity of park resources while also maintaining a range of quality visitor experiences, meets NPS purposes and goals for the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, and meets National Environmental Policy Act goals. The selected alternative will not result in the impairment of park resources and will allow the NPS to conserve park resources and provide for their enjoyment by visitors. The officials responsible for implementing the selected alternative are the Regional Director, Southeast Region, and the Superintendent, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site.