

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
RECORD OF DECISION
FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN /
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
Saratoga National Historical Park
Saratoga and Stillwater, New York**

SUMMARY

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (Public Law 91-190) and the regulations promulgated by the Council of Environmental Quality (40 CFR Part 1500), the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has prepared this Record of Decision for the Final General Management Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement for Saratoga National Historical Park, New York. The Record of Decision is a statement of the background of the project, the decision made, synopsis of the other alternatives considered, the basis for the decision, the environmentally preferable alternative, a summary of measures to minimize environmental harm, and an overview of the public involvement in the decision-making process.

DECISION (SELECTED ACTION)

After thorough analysis and extensive public involvement, the National Park Service will implement Alternative D (the Preferred Alternative identified in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements) to help guide management of Saratoga National Historical Park. Alternative D was selected because it supports the purpose and significance of the park, and minimizes impacts on the park's resources while providing for public use and enjoyment of those resources.

Alternative D: Focus on the Burgoyne Campaign seeks to improve visitor understanding of the events that led to the 1777 British surrender by providing a more complete and logical depiction of these events. This approach also includes—secondary to the strategic factors—interpretation of the efforts to commemorate the military events and opportunities to reflect on their meaning. Additionally, Alternative D enables the park to expand its partnerships with other Burgoyne Campaign–related sites and regional entities in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

Key objectives of Alternative D include:

- Interpreting the logistics and military tactics of the battles, siege, and surrender within the broader context of the Burgoyne Campaign.
- Suggesting, to the extent possible, the character of the battlefield and Victory Woods in 1777. In key areas, indicating the pattern and general character of open land and woodland, physically depicting the locations of battle-era structures, roads, and defensive positions, and portraying features characteristic of military activity.
- Re-establishing views important to the interpretation of the battles.
- Providing a tour sequence that unfolds in a logical fashion and that follows the progression of the battles, siege, and surrender, and enhancing public access to key historic sites, such as Bemis Heights.
- Secondarily to strategic factors, providing a battlefield experience that is contemplative in nature and that offers opportunities for quiet reflection. Such opportunities could include interpretation that embraces battle experiences from such varying perspectives as camp followers, American Indians, local farmers, women and others who were caught up in the struggles.
- Rehabilitating and interpreting the character-defining landscape features of Victory Woods.
- Encouraging alternate modes of park touring by making bicycles available to visitors (via concession or other method) at convenient locations within the park, extending the park's trail system to facilitate non-motorized access to interpretation, and exploring the feasibility of offering special interpretive tours using specifically designed vehicles that could transport a group of visitors (and their bikes) for ranger-led tours.

- Providing orientation to the entire park at both the Battlefield Unit and the Old Saratoga Unit to enable visitors to receive an overview and orientation to the park at the outset of their visit, regardless of which park unit is their first point of arrival.
- Providing orientation and interpretation at the Battlefield Unit at the existing visitor center and improving the Route 32 entrance to provide a more appropriate entry to the battlefield and the visitor center.
- Providing orientation at the Old Saratoga Unit in a new facility developed at an appropriate location in Old Saratoga. This facility could include classroom and public assembly space, as well as a “showcase gallery” highlighting other sites of importance throughout the region. This facility would be sited and designed to allow for expansion as new opportunities and regional partnerships evolve.
- Linking the Old Saratoga Unit sites with one another and thematically related sites outside of the park boundary via pedestrian, bicycle, and auto routes.
- Interpreting the Saratoga Monument to portray the commemorative movement and return the landscape to reflect its original formal design.
- Preserving the Schuyler House and utilizing a combination of historic furnishings and other interpretive media that best portrays the story of the Schuyler Family in Old Saratoga. Identifying and indicating locations of landscape features, such as the earlier Schuyler houses, outbuildings, quarters of the enslaved, gardens, and the canal to reflect the use of the site from 1720 (when the first Schuyler House was built) to 1837 (the year the Schuyler Family sold the property).
- Expanding interpretation of the historic Champlain Canal.
- Expanding partnerships to place the park in its broader historic context and to strengthen the park’s role in the regional initiatives of the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Three additional alternatives were analyzed for impacts on the environment and are summarized below. Alternative D was formed by combining elements of alternatives B and C.

Alternative A: Focus on Current Management Objectives allowed for incremental action toward existing objectives with minimum change to the park’s current management philosophy and physical conditions. This concept would have entailed no significant expansion of the park’s participation in regional initiatives over the current situation. Alternative A served as the “no-action” alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

Alternative B: Focus on the Battles, Siege, and Surrender concentrated on improving visitor understanding of the events that led to the 1777 British surrender at Saratoga by providing a more complete and logical depiction of these events. It rehabilitated key landscape features to help the visitor understand conditions faced by the armed forces and how landscape conditions were used and manipulated to serve tactical needs. This concept also enabled park staff to work with regional partners in developing outreach initiatives.

Alternative C: Focus on the Park as Memorial Grounds presented the park as a memorial landscape that had been commemorated in numerous ways over generations, from the erection of monuments, to the establishment of state and federal parkland, to contemporary efforts to link important sites through regional heritage initiatives. This approach preserved and enhanced interpretation of key landscape features to help the visitor understand the military events of 1777 and the efforts to commemorate those events. Moreover, this alternative envisioned the park as an important gateway to the regional initiatives of the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as the alternative that best meets the criteria or objectives set out in Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The objectives are outlined as follows:

- Fulfills the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.

- Assures for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.
- Attains the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
- Preserves important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintains, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.
- Achieves a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.
- Enhances the quality of renewable resources and approaches the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it is the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources. Alternative D was selected as the environmentally preferred alternative.

DECISION RATIONALE

Summary of Major Applicable Laws and Policies

The major federal laws and policies that apply to federal agency actions in the General Management Plan are the National Park Service Organic Act and General Authorities Act, the public laws creating and augmenting Saratoga National Historical Park, the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, the National Environmental Policy Act, and related provisions of the National Park Service *Management Policies 2001*. The management actions selected comply with the requirements of federal law, including those statutes listed above.

The provisions of the National Park Service Organic Act and the National Park Service General Authorities Act, as amended, provide the most important statutory directive for the National Park Service. The Organic Act requires that park resources and values be managed in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for future generations. The General Authorities Act prohibits managing units of the National Park System in derogation of the values and purposes for which the various areas have been established, except as Congress may directly and specifically provide. The National Park Service considers the two mandates (no impairment, no derogation) as defining a single standard for the management of the National Park System.

National Park Service *Management Policies 2001* provides guidance for interpreting the National Park Service Organic Act and the amendments to the General Authorities Act. Generally, these two provisions direct the Secretary of the Interior to manage parks for conservation purposes and public enjoyment without impairment. The mandate to conserve park resources and values is separate from the prohibition on impairment. The conservation mandate, thus, applies even when there is no risk that park resources or values may be impaired.

Providing opportunities for public enjoyment of park resources and values to the people of the United States is a fundamental part of the National Park Service mission. This includes people who directly experience parks and those who appreciate them from afar. It also includes deriving benefit and inspiration from parks. Congress has provided that when there is a conflict between conserving resources and values and providing for enjoyment of them, conservation is to be predominant.

Although park managers must seek ways to avoid or minimize impacts on park resources and values, they have the discretion to allow impacts when necessary to fulfill the purposes of the park. This discretion exists, however, only so long as the impact does not constitute an impairment of the affected resources or values. The sole exception is an activity specifically mandated by Congress that would cause an impairment or derogation.

Methodology for Analyzing Impacts

The potential impacts of the alternatives were evaluated and an analysis of impacts was included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The planning team based the impact analysis and conclusions largely on the review of existing research and studies, information provided by experts in the National Park

Service and other agencies and organizations, and the professional judgment of the staff of Saratoga National Historical Park. Where necessary and appropriate in all the alternatives, the planning team proposed mitigating measures to minimize or avoid impacts.

Effects were categorized as direct, indirect, or cumulative. Direct effects are caused by an action and occur at the same time and place as the action. Indirect effects are caused by the action and occur later or farther away, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Cumulative effects are the impacts on the environment that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or nonfederal) or person undertakes such other action. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor, but collectively significant, actions taking place over a period of time. The analysis of individual actions included identification and characterization of impacts. Characterization included a discussion of the type, duration, and intensity of impact.

In the impact analysis, cultural resources consist of historic and designed landscapes, historic buildings and structures, monuments, archeological sites and resources, collections and archives, and associated sites outside of park boundaries.

The impact topic of natural resources included discussions of the effects on the integrity of natural systems and features, including soils, topography, vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, and water resources, wetlands, and floodplain. To conduct the analysis, research reports were consulted and information on known resources was compiled. Where possible, locations of sensitive resources were compared with the locations of proposed developments and modifications. The analysis was qualitative in nature. Predictions about short-term and long-term site impacts were based on previous studies and in consultation with subject-matter experts.

Discussions of the visitor experience covered the effects on visitors' ability to experience the park's primary resources and their setting and to access educational and interpretive opportunities. Information gathered in a visitor use survey was used along with public input during the planning process to evaluate the potential impacts of each alternative on visitors.

Discussions of impacts on park operations focused on circulation and access, facilities, staffing and volunteers, and fee collection. The discussion of socioeconomic effects consisted of the effects of each alternative on the local and regional economy.

After a review of potential impacts, the team concluded that Alternative D best protects contributing resources, while enhancing public access to those resources. Overall, Alternative D provides the greatest number of beneficial impacts in comparison to the other alternatives.

The following set of tables provides a summary of the impact analysis that led the team to its conclusion that Alternative D is the environmentally preferred alternative, as well as the selected action. Table 1 outlines the criteria used to define the impact intensities associated with resource types. Tables 2 through 5 indicate, for each alternative, the frequency, intensity, and duration of potential impacts on park resource types. It should be noted that the following tables address impacts and not findings of effect in the context of 106 compliance as such effects will be determined through continued 106 consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer on specific actions, as outlined on page 210 in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Table 1: Criteria for Impact Intensities

	Natural Resources	Threatened and Endangered Species	Cultural Resources	Visitor Experience	Park Operations	Socioeconomic Resources
Negligible	Impact localized and not detectable, or at lowest levels of detection	Change in a population or individuals of a species; consequences to population not measurable or perceptible, or other changes not measurable or perceptible	Impact barely perceptible and not measurable; confined to small areas or affecting a single contributing element of a larger national register district with low data potential	Impact barely detectable, not in primary resource areas or would occasionally affect a few visitors	Impact not detectable, no discernible effect on ability to provide services, to manage resources, or to operate the park	Impact not detectable, no discernible effect on socioeconomic environment
Minor	Impact localized and slightly detectable but would not affect overall structure of any natural community	Change in a population or individuals of a species, if measurable, would be small and localized, or other changes would be slight but detectable	Impact perceptible and measurable, but would remain localized; affecting a single contributing element of a larger national register district with low to moderate data potential, or would not affect character-defining features of a national register eligible or listed property	Impact slight but detectable, not in primary resource areas or would affect few visitors	Impact slightly detectable but would not obstruct or improve overall ability to provide services, to manage resources, or to operate the park	Impact slightly detectable but would not affect overall socioeconomic environment
Moderate	Impact clearly detectable; could affect individual species, communities, or natural processes appreciably	Change in a population or individuals of a species measurable but localized	Impact sufficient to change a character-defining feature but would not diminish resource's integrity enough to jeopardize its national register eligibility, or it generally would involve a single or small group of contributing elements with moderate to high data potential	Impact readily apparent, somewhat adverse or somewhat beneficial, in primary resource areas or would affect many visitors	Impact clearly detectable and could appreciably obstruct or improve the ability to provide services, to manage resources, and/or to operate the park	Impact clearly detectable and could have an appreciable effect on the socioeconomic environment
Major	Impact highly noticeable and would substantially influence natural resources, e.g. individuals or groups of species, communities, or natural processes	Change in a population or individuals of a species measurable and would result in permanent consequence to the population	Substantial, highly noticeable change in character-defining features would diminish resource's integrity so much that it would no longer be eligible for national register listing, or it would involve a large group of contributing elements or individually significant properties with exceptional data potential	Effect severely adverse or exceptionally beneficial, in primary resource areas, or would affect most of visitors	Impact would have a substantial, highly noticeable, potentially permanent influence on the ability to provide services, to manage resources, or to operate the park	Impact would have a substantial, highly noticeable influence on socioeconomic environment

Table 2: Summary of Impacts Associated with Alternative A

Impact Topic	Long-term Impacts=X				Short-term Impacts=(x)			
	Beneficial				Adverse			
	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
CULTURAL RESOURCES								
HISTORIC AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES		X		X				
ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES			X				X	
COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES		X						
NATURAL RESOURCES	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
SOILS					(x)	(x)		
TOPOGRAPHY					X	X		
VEGETATION	X		X		X			
WILDLIFE	X	X	X				X	
THREATENED / ENDANGERED SPECIES		X				X		
WATER RESOURCES					(x)			
VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
ORIENTATION		X	XX				X	
INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES	X	X	XXX				X	
VISITATION	(x)							
PARK OPERATIONS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
CIRCULATION AND ACCESS		X	X		X			
FACILITIES					X	X	X	
STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS			X				X	
FEE COLLECTION		X						
SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY	X							
TOTALS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
	4LT 1ST	8LT	10LT	1LT	4LT 2ST	3LT 1ST	6LT	0

Table 3: Summary of Impacts Associated with Alternative B

Impact Topic	Long-term Impacts=X				Short-term Impacts=(x)			
	Beneficial				Adverse			
	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
CULTURAL RESOURCES								
HISTORIC AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES			X	XX				
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES					(x)			
ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES			X		X		X	
COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES		X						
ASSOCIATED SITES OUTSIDE BOUNDARY		X						
NATURAL RESOURCES	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
SOILS					(x)	(x)		
TOPOGRAPHY					X	X		
VEGETATION	X		X		X			
WILDLIFE	X	X	X				X	
THREATENED / ENDANGERED SPECIES		X				X		
WATER RESOURCES					(x)(x)			
VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
ORIENTATION			XX	XXX				
INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES			XXXX	XXXX X			X	
VISITATION	(x)	XXX						
PARK OPERATIONS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
CIRCULATION AND ACCESS			XXX	X	X			
FACILITIES					X			
STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS				X		X		
FEE COLLECTION		X						
SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY		X						
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
		X						
TOTALS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.
	2LT 1ST	10LT	13LT	12LT	5LT 4ST	3LT 1ST	3LT	0

Table 4: Summary of Impacts Associated with Alternative C

Impact Topic	Long-term Impacts=X				Short-term Impacts=(x)			
	Beneficial				Adverse			
	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
CULTURAL RESOURCES								
HISTORIC AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES		X	XX					
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES		X			(x)			
ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES	X				X			
COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES		X						
ASSOCIATED SITES OUTSIDE BOUNDARY		X						
NATURAL RESOURCES	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
SOILS					(x)(x)			
TOPOGRAPHY					XX			
VEGETATION	XX	X			X			
WILDLIFE	X	XX				XX		
THREATENED / ENDANGERED SPECIES		X				X		
WATER RESOURCES					(x)(x)(x)			
VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
ORIENTATION				XXXX				
INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES			XXXX	XXXXX				
VISITATION	(x)		XXX					
PARK OPERATIONS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
CIRCULATION AND ACCESS			XX	XX				
FACILITIES				X		X		
STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS				X		X		
FEE COLLECTION		X						
SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY			X					
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
			X					
TOTALS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
	4LT 1ST	9LT	13LT	13LT	3LT 6ST	5LT	0	0

Table 5: Summary of Impacts Associated with Alternative D

Impact Topic	Long-term Impacts=X				Short-term Impacts=(x)			
	Beneficial				Adverse			
	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
CULTURAL RESOURCES								
HISTORIC AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES			XX	XX				
HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES		X			(x)			
ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES			X		X		X	
COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES		X						
ASSOCIATED SITES OUTSIDE BOUNDARY		X						
NATURAL RESOURCES	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
SOILS						(x)(x)		
TOPOGRAPHY						XX		
VEGETATION	X		X		X			
WILDLIFE	X	X	X			X	X	
THREATENED / ENDANGERED SPECIES		X				X		
WATER RESOURCES					(x)(x) (x)			
VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
ORIENTATION			XX	XXXX				
INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES			XXXX	XXXX XX				
VISITATION	(x)	XX	XX					
PARK OPERATIONS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.

Impact Topic	Long-term Impacts=X				Short-term Impacts=(x)			
	Beneficial				Adverse			
CIRCULATION AND ACCESS			XX	XXX	X			
FACILITIES				X		X		
STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS				X		X		
FEE COLLECTION		X						
SOCIOECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY			X					
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
		X						
TOTALS	Neg.	Min.	Mod.	Maj.	Neg.	Min.	Mod	Maj.
	2LT 1ST	9LT	16LT	17LT	3LT 4ST	6LT 2ST	2LT	0

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

The National Park Service has investigated all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental impacts that could result from implementation of the selected action. Alternative D incorporates mitigation measures to minimize and offset potential impacts which are presented in detail in the Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Monitoring and enforcement programs will oversee the implementation of mitigation measures. These programs will ensure compliance monitoring; biological and cultural resource protection, including archeological resource protection; pollution prevention measures; and visitor safety and education.

FINDING ON IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES AND VALUES

National Park Service *Management Policies 2001* requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether the actions would impair park resources. The National Park Service has determined that implementation of Alternative D, the Preferred Alternative, will not constitute impairment of Saratoga National Historical Park resources and values. The Preferred Alternative will have beneficial long-term effects on park resources ranging from negligible to major. With implementation of Alternative D, negative impacts could potentially occur to archeological sites, topography, soils, and woodland species due to modification of the park's forest /field configuration. The predicted impacts would be at acceptable levels, ranging from negligible to moderate, and could be mitigated through management actions. As with other specific actions proposed in the plan, the National Park Service will continue 106 consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer on the modification of the park's forest / field configuration. Furthermore, it has been determined that Alternative D will not significantly impact a resource or value whose conservation is 1) necessary to fulfill specific legislative purposes; 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 the park's general management plan or other relevant National Park Service planning document.

CONSULTATION

Consultation and coordination with appropriate federal and state agencies were conducted throughout the preparation of the General Management Plan. Regarding historic properties of significance to Indian tribes, consultation with the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians was initiated in February 2001 and continued throughout the planning process via mailings of newsletters, the draft plan, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Regarding cultural resources, consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer was initiated in January 2001 and continued throughout the process via mailings of newsletters, an advance copy of the draft plan, the actual draft plan, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The State Historic Preservation Officer responded with formal comments on the draft plan and concluded that the National Park Service made a convincing case for the selection of Alternative D as the Preferred Alternative. The National Park Service will continue 106 consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer on specific actions as the plan is implemented.

DESCRIPTION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Public scoping for the plan was initiated in March 2000 when the planning team held two public sessions. At these meetings, team members discussed the purpose and significance statements and the park's goals

with the participants. Also in March 2000, the team invited over 30 scholars and resource specialists to define the park's interpretive themes.

The team followed the scoping sessions with a newsletter in August 2000, which highlighted comments received from the public and reported on the status of planning. The newsletter was distributed to over 700 people and was also made available on the park's website.

The team then developed three alternatives, which, along with the interpretive themes, were presented in the second newsletter, published in the autumn of 2001. This newsletter was distributed to over 1,000 people and was posted on the park's website.

In addition to publishing the newsletter, the planning team sought public input at three meetings with various stakeholder groups. In July 2001, the team presented the preliminary alternatives to area planners and to local and county officials. In October 2001, stakeholders provided input at a meeting that focused on treatment of the Schuyler Estate. A meeting in April 2002 addressed the feasibility of developing a regional visitor center in Old Saratoga. Throughout the process, the superintendent kept local, county, and state officials informed on the progress of the plan, and consulted with them on specific issues.

Input from these sources made it apparent that a new alternative, combining favored elements of the initial concepts, was desirable. In response, the planning team developed "Alternative D," as the Preferred Alternative.

Alternative D was highlighted in the Draft General Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement, made available for a 60-day public review period starting in January 2004. Some 2000 draft plan summary newsletters were distributed. The full draft plan was distributed to a list of nearly 60 recipients, which included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New York State Historic Preservation Officer, the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians, and other agencies and organizations. Both the summary newsletter and the full draft plan were made available on the Internet and at area libraries. On January 22, 2004, the team held a public open house at the park visitor center, which was attended by some 45 people. Over the course of the public comment period, a total of 32 written comments were received. The team carefully reviewed all responses and incorporated substantive comments in the Final General Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The consensus of the public comment period was that National Park Service was pursuing the correct path for the park in Alternative D, the Preferred Alternative. Comments from individuals and public agencies did not require the National Park Service to add other alternatives, significantly alter existing alternatives, or make changes to the impact analysis of the effects of any alternative. Thus, an abbreviated format was used for the responses to comments in the final Environmental Impact Statement, in compliance with the 1978 implementing regulations (40 CFR 1503.4[c]) for the National Environmental Policy Act. In August 2004, the abbreviated Final Environmental Impact Statement was made available to the public for a 30-day "no-action period," which concluded on September 2, 2004. The Final Environmental Impact Statement was distributed to a list of nearly 100 recipients, which included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New York State Historic Preservation Officer, the Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians, and other agencies, organizations, officials, and individuals.

CONCLUSION

Alternative D, the selected action, provides the most comprehensive and proactive strategy among the alternatives considered for meeting the National Park Service's purposes, goals, and objectives for managing Saratoga National Historical Park in accordance with Congressional direction, federal laws, and National Park Service Management Policies. The selection of Alternative D, as reflected by the analysis contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement would not result in the impairment of park resources or values and would allow the National Park Service to conserve park resources and provide for their enjoyment by these and future generations.

Approved:

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Marie Rust

Marie Rust
Regional Director
Northeast Region
National Park Service

Date:

September 23, 2004
