

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park General Management Plan

What We Heard and Learned

Introduction

In 2009, we invited you to help imagine the future of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. Many participated in the 4 open house workshops held in communities surrounding the park, spoke with us at GMP information stations set up outside of our visitor centers, read our first newsletter, stayed connected with the planning process via our website, or filled out a comment card with your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. We appreciate your participation and are using it to help guide the development of a General Management Plan for the preservation and management of the park.

The following provides a brief summary of the ideas and comments that were included in the comment cards. A complete report of responses is available on the NPS planning website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/frsp>.

What is most special to you about Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park?

"Open spaces, untouched woodlands, trails, historic resources, interpretive capabilities, historians and staff."

"History is not only to be read, but to be felt. I feel history in this place."

"Historical values, preservation, open space, and trails"

One of the sentiments that we heard most frequently involved the significance of the historic resources of the park, with many noting the great benefit that the park provides by preserving portions of Virginia Civil War history. Many shared how much they value the park's interpretive programs, including films, exhibits, and tours, as well as the cannons. Others discussed how the park offers visitors a way to step back in time to learn about the battles and to understand and experience park stories.

Many also commented on the value of the park's preserved open spaces, including battlefields, trails, and woods, and how these spaces provide the ability to learn about and imagine life at the time of the battles. Respondents also noted that park open spaces preserve land and vistas that might otherwise be developed for residential and commercial uses. Many noted their appreciation for the open spaces of the park, and how they allow for recreational uses, including walking, running, bike riding, and horseback riding. Many also expressed support for additional recreational trails in the park, as well as trails that connect to neighboring trails and greenways.

What opportunities do you see for the future of the park?

"Incredible opportunities to incorporate technology to improve the visitor experience (podcasts, videos, audio clips, new exhibits with all of the above)"

"The best opportunity for the park would include strong legislation that would increase the boundaries of the park..."

"It would be great to be able to ride horses through the park, like so many soldiers did back then."

Partnership opportunities were frequently mentioned and specific suggestions included working with neighboring communities, local governments, non-profit groups, and economic development and regional tourism groups. Many discussed additional preservation opportunities, with suggestions for expanding the park boundary to

protect significant lands related to the battles and to provide for additional interpretation opportunities. There also were suggestions to restore historic views and tree lines for better understanding of the battles.

Opportunities related to park programs were discussed, with suggestions for additional interpretation programs by park staff and volunteers, more educational programs for school children, and re-enactments and living history programs on NPS lands. It was suggested that current technology be incorporated into park programs and the exhibits at the visitor centers. There were suggestions for additional or enhanced visitor contact stations at Ellwood, Wilderness, and in Spotsylvania Court House.

Many noted how much they enjoyed walking, biking, and horseback riding in the park and encouraged increased recreational opportunities such as guided or interpretive trails for horseback riders, new trails for hikers and riders, and living history programs that include horses. Other comments centered on the idea of connecting the battlefields via a trail, as well as connecting into the wider regional trail network. There were also specific suggestions for places in the park where circulation, access, and safety could be improved.

How can we better protect important views and historic lands related to the battles?

"Promotion, engagement, volunteerism."

"Create development buffers/ordinances/protected viewsheds within certain proximity to the parkland."

"Seek to have the authorized park boundaries be expanded. Continue to work with CWPT, CVBT, and other local groups to preserve land and viewsheds."

There were many ideas for the continued protection of views and lands, including partnerships, a park boundary adjustment, and land use planning tools. Partnership opportunities centered on strengthening the relationship between the park and the community, neighbors, heritage tourism groups, and businesses to support park efforts and the benefit of educating the public (including children) about the importance of preserving historical resources. Others suggested that the park pursue funding opportunities for maintenance of existing resources as well as additional preservation initiatives.

Many provided specific suggestions for the protection of park resources including vegetation buffering, landscape restoration, and the protection of earthworks and other park cultural resources. It was suggested that a clearly marked trail network would provide protection for park resources. Adjustments to the park boundary were discussed, as well as the use of land use planning tools, such as ordinances, zoning, easements, and the mapping of park resources. It was suggested that the park work with neighboring municipalities to incorporate historical, cultural, and viewsheds protection into their land use planning.

What are ways for visitors to enjoy and experience the park, while ensuring that historic, cultural, and natural resources are protected?

"Keep well marked paths and signage for visitors"

"There must be access that the public cannot visit in mass. Areas to be preserved for future generations – 75 to 100 years – big picture"

"The visitors need to be educated on the park, to a certain degree, to spark interest in travelling to the area. After this is established, then tours, signs, and other more in depth resources can be used to interpret the battlefield."

Many would like the plan to address the protection of the park's natural and cultural resources. Some suggested that the park should consider developing restricted access areas in order to preserve them, while others felt that

park visitors must be allowed access to all resources so that the park remains interesting and relevant. Respondents emphasized the need for signage and enforcement of rules.

Many respondents wanted to see more trail connections for all types of use in the park to increase recreational and access opportunities and also to protect resources. In addition, many suggested linking existing park trails into the wider regional trail network, and to consider linking the 4 battlefields via trail. Equestrian users encouraged additional access for horseback riding, and mentioned the historical relevancy of horses to the Civil War.

Respondents also discussed park facilities and the need for additional meeting and education spaces, expanded visitor centers, and comfort stations. Minimizing vehicle traffic within the park and improving parking for cars and buses were also mentioned. Ideas for additional or expanded park programs were discussed, such as tours that allow descendants to follow the path of an ancestor, iPod and cell phone tours, living history, and partnerships with Civil War museums.

What organizations, institutions, and individuals might be interested in partnering with park staff to preserve and interpret battlefield lands?

Partnerships are integral to the success of National Park Service sites throughout the country. They help to cultivate protection, preservation and understanding of the natural and cultural resources that have been designated as nationally significant. We asked for your ideas on who the park should partner with to preserve and interpret battlefield lands and you provided many suggestions, including:

- 4H Groups and FFA
- Activists
- American Hiking Society
- Archaeological Groups
- Archives: Rappahannock Heritage Center; county archives; Virginia State Library; selected Universities with archival collections
- BCH Friends of the Battlefield
- Boy and Girl Scouts
- Businesses
- City and County Governments: Fredericksburg, Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, Caroline, Orange, and Culpeper
- Civil War Roundtables in Region
- Community leaders
- Conservation USA
- County historical societies: Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George, Caroline, Orange
- Ellwood volunteers
- Environmental groups
- Equestrian groups, local saddle clubs, and trail riding clubs - Back Country Horsemen of America, Battlefield Back Country Horsemen, Battlefield Equestrian Society, Battlefield Horse Society, Battlefield Saddle Club, Clifton Horse Society, Culpeper Horse Owners Association, Lake of the Woods Stables, Majestic Meadow Stables, Nokesville Horse Society, Ridge Riders Saddle Club, Rusty Stirrup Riding Club, and Shenandoah Ride Club
- Equestrian Land Conservation Resource
- Friends Groups: Friends of the Fredericksburg Area Battlefields; Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield (Ellwood); Friends of Stafford Civil War Sites
- Historians, historical groups, heritage organizations, and Civil War groups
- Lease program with farmers
- Legislators
- Local landowners with historic resources
- Local park and recreation governments
- Local schools

- Military and FBI schools
- Military veterans groups - MOAA, ROA, Legion, DAV
- Moncure Conway Society
- Museums: Museum of the Confederacy; Fredericksburg Area Museum; County museums; Virginia Historical Society; Civil War Life Museum; White Oak Civil War Museum; Civil War Museum (Philadelphia, PA, formerly MOLLUS); National Civil War Museum, Harrisburg, PA.; Smithsonian Institution
- National Defense University on Ft. McNair in Washington DC
- Other National Parks in Region (Richmond to Manassas, Northern Neck)
- People with connections to the park
- Preservation organizations: Central Virginia Battlefield Trust, Civil War Preservation Trust
- Private Foundations: Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, George Washington Foundation, Moncure Conway Foundation
- Private history and interest groups
- Private tour guides
- Re-enactor and living history organizations
- Regional Civil War and antiques dealers
- Regional colleges' and universities' history faculties, historic preservation departments at local colleges, and county and city schools history coordinators
- Relic hunter organizations
- Specific event groups: "'Yankees in Falmouth!' Living History Event;" Sesquicentennial Events; etc.
- Spotsylvania Greenway Initiative
- Spotsylvania Visitor Center
- Stafford Historical Society
- States and government officials
- Students and teachers
- The Committee of 500
- Tourism offices
- Veteran's Affairs and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
- Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
- Virginia Horse Council
- Virginia Quarter Horse Association
- Virginia Wild Horse and Burro Association
- Volunteers
- Youth Groups and Youth Church Groups