

June 8, 2011

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: National Monument Designation for Historic Fort Monroe, Hampton, Virginia

Dear President Obama:

I am writing on behalf of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to respectfully request that you utilize your authority pursuant to the Antiquities Act to create a new National Monument at Fort Monroe to commemorate the rich layers of heritage, culture, and nature which distinguish this irreplaceable historic place.

As a National Monument, Fort Monroe should be preserved and interpreted to benefit the American public through a joint working partnership of the National Park Service and the Commonwealth of Virginia. This constructive approach is supported by the Virginia Congressional Delegation, Governor Robert McDonnell, Hampton's Mayor Molly Joseph Ward, the Fort Monroe Authority, as well as the nation's historic preservation and conservation communities.

Fort Monroe is an unparalleled treasure of our shared American heritage and the unique birthplace of the Civil War-era "Contraband" movement for self-emancipation. Contraband heritage is one of the least well-known and most important chapters of American history. Contraband heritage commemorates the struggles and triumphs of 500,000 African American women, children, and men who freed themselves from slavery at great risk and, thereby, secured their own liberty, influenced national politics, and hastened the formal Emancipation Proclamation. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, there is no better place to understand Contraband heritage than historic Fort Monroe, and no better way than creation of a National Monument at Fort Monroe to inspire contemporary dialogue about the pursuit of justice and active self-determination.

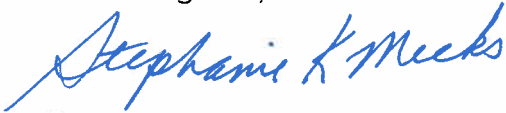
The National Trust has been engaged throughout the land-use planning process triggered by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Act decision to close Fort Monroe. We recognize the exceptional benefits afforded to Fort Monroe by the first-rate Programmatic Agreement, Reuse Plan, and Design Standards developed by the Fort Monroe Authority, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and others. These tools provide a strong foundation for historic preservation and compatible economic development at Fort Monroe. The National Trust also has supported the legislative effort to establish a new National Park at Fort Monroe, and we are confident that, as

a National Monument, Fort Monroe would benefit from the coordinated stewardship of the National Park Service, Fort Monroe Authority, and Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The National Trust has direct experience with the sort of partnership we propose for Fort Monroe. We are a founding Key Partner of the innovative Cedar Creek & Belle Grove National Historical Park in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. With Belle Grove, Inc., the National Trust is proud to be the longtime steward of historic Belle Grove Plantation, which is the heart and *de facto* visitor center for the National Park. We retain ownership and control of our property, and greatly value the current and future contributions of the National Park Service and Virginia Department of Historic Resources to our common goals for the Cedar Creek & Belle Grove National Historical Park.

The actions taken in 1861 at historic Fort Monroe changed America forever. The National Trust for Historic Preservation strongly supports the Presidential designation of Fort Monroe as a National Monument, and I respectfully request you take action to designate Fort Monroe as a National Monument through your authority pursuant to the Antiquities Act.

With warmest regards,



Stephanie K. Meeks

SKM/rln