



IN REPLY REFER TO:

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## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Northeast Region  
United States Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

SEP 20 2010

The Honorable Jim Webb  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Webb:

On May 24, 2010, you, along with four other members of the Virginia congressional delegation, requested that the National Park Service (NPS) undertake a further resource and capability statement on Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, provide technical assistance to the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority, now the Fort Monroe Authority (FMA), and to assist in defining a logical NPS role at the fort. This letter sets forth the findings of a NPS interdisciplinary team which visited the fort between July 19 and July 24, 2010.

The team investigated and toured numerous resources at the fort and conducted meetings with staff of the FMA, the U.S. Army Fort Monroe Garrison Command, Hampton Mayor Molly Ward, and Hampton Councilman Roscoe Kearny, II. A meeting was also held with representatives of the Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park. A debriefing was conducted for representatives of the Garrison Command and the FMA at the end of the visit.

In May 2008, a previous NPS team completed a reconnaissance study of Fort Monroe, requested by then Congresswoman Thelma Drake. That study concluded that resources associated with Fort Monroe are nationally significant and likely to be found suitable for potential designation as a unit of the national park system. The report did not reach similar conclusions on the feasibility or need for NPS management criteria necessary for designation. At the time, the Fort Monroe Reuse Plan had not been completed and no information was available on what entity would ultimately manage fort resources on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia (Commonwealth). The reuse plan has now been completed and the Commonwealth has enacted legislation authorizing the FMA to implement the plan. With these actions, the current NPS team concludes that criteria for the establishment of units of the national park system could likely be met at Fort Monroe.

This report considers, due to the immediate need for the FMA to generate operating and capital revenue through leasing, the possibility that the services of an outside entity would be desirable to manage certain resources and specific categories of interpretation at Fort Monroe. Such an arrangement would potentially result in cost savings to the FMA and permit it to concentrate on recreational and other visitor services that are more revenue positive. Many findings of this

report would also be applicable to continuing administration of all interpretative programming by the FMA.

The analysis leading up to this report has been conducted pursuant to Section 1(b)(4) of Public Law 105-391 which authorizes the NPS to conduct preliminary resource assessments, gather data on potential study areas, and provide planning and technical assistance, among other tasks, as long as the costs of such activities do not exceed \$25,000. Since Congress has not authorized a Special Resource Study of Fort Monroe, this report simply sets forth an assessment of resources and offers advice to the FMA on areas of Fort Monroe that might be prioritized and managed for preservation and visitor experience similar to approaches that may be found in units of the National Park System. We invite further discussion regarding any potential role the NPS may play in achieving these objectives through continued technical assistance or other means.

### **Primary Area of Interest**

The team identified a primary area of interest delineated by the road system surrounding the fort and moat. A photo with the primary area of interest delineated is attached to this report. The area includes all of the resources within the fortress and moat, as well as all resources between the moat and the streets comprising the outer perimeter. This area is the most likely to attract future visitors and contains Fort Monroe's most historic resources.

### **Historic Resources of Highest Value for Visitor Experience**

While the team recognizes that many resources of Fort Monroe, including the fortress itself, offer extensive opportunities for visitor enjoyment, the following resources constitute a logical grouping that could be efficiently and economically managed and serve as venues for a cohesive understanding of the fort's history. It is likely that any outside entity conducting interpretive operations at the fort would desire to own and manage these resources.

- **Building #1**- considered by the team to be in fair condition, this original fort headquarters building was constructed in 1819 and is the oldest non-fortification structure;
- **Building #50** - considered by the team to be in good condition, this historic officers' quarters was constructed in stages beginning in 1826 and may house the fort's original construction engineering office;
- **Building #17** - considered by the team to be in good condition, this building, also known as "Lee's Quarters" was constructed in 1823 for officers' housing; and
- **The Parade Ground** - considered by the team to be in good condition, this resource was cleared in 1824 for a visit by the Marquis de Lafayette. The resource serves as a focal point and primary cultural landscape feature of the fort. It has significant interpretive value and ties the above building locations together.

**Casemate #22**, which is located directly across from Building #50, also has interpretive value for self-guided touring, different than that associated with the nearby Army Casemate Museum with its objects and exhibits. While it is unlikely that any outside entity would want to be responsible for the full care and maintenance of these casemates, long term use of the structure would be

desirable under a lease or other comparable arrangement. Modest restoration through removal of modern improvements, along with limited exhibits, would be beneficial to enhance the visitor experience.

The team believes it unlikely, due to cost constraints, that any entity providing for preservation and interpretation of certain fort resources would want additional control or management responsibilities for the fortress, other casemates, the moat, or seawalls at Fort Monroe. The team also does not believe that natural resources at Old Point Comfort should be included in the primary area of interest, since these resources are better suited for resource-based recreational uses undertaken as part of the FMA's revenue generating mission. The natural resources are not of national significance.

#### **Historic Preservation in the Primary Area of Interest**

The team believes it critical that all resources within the defined primary area of interest be protected in perpetuity through appropriate easements. Such easements would not preclude the FMA from providing for lease and adaptive reuse of the buildings in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Properties. They would guarantee that the primary area of interest maintains its integrity without the potential threat of future demolitions, exterior alterations, or development of modern intrusions.

#### **Future Uses Within and Adjacent to the Primary Area of Interest**

The team believes it also critical that a process be developed to ensure compatible uses of buildings and lands within the primary area of interest, as well as in the North Gate Area and Wherry Housing Quarter. The latter two locations are immediately adjacent to the perimeter of the primary area of interest. Intended uses within the Wherry Housing Quarter have not yet been determined by the FMA. Future development and uses in both locations could significantly impact visitor experiences unless they are planned to be compatible with the values inherent in maintaining the historic character of the fort.

#### **Interpretive Planning**

The team reviewed the recent draft interpretive plan prepared by consultants for the FMA and found it does not meet NPS standards. Therefore, the team believes that whoever has responsibilities for managing the historic resources of highest value, noted above, take the lead on interpretation of Fort Monroe heritage resources and history in cooperation with the FMA. It is imperative that visitors to this nationally significant fort experience cohesive interpretive programming similar to that offered at national parks. There are many interpretive and additional visitor experiences that the FMA could provide that would be complementary to this approach.

A relationship should also be developed with the Casemate Museum so that visitors have a seamless experience. Relevant objects from the museum could also potentially be placed on loan for interpretive purposes in the resources of highest value. An agreement with the Department of Homeland Security for interpretation of Old Point Comfort Lighthouse would be an additional benefit to the visitor experience.

Interpretation within the primary area of interest should focus on specific aspects of the history surrounding Old Point Comfort and Fort Monroe. These include:

1. *Old Point Comfort, its use for successive fortifications, and its role in the War of 1812;*
2. *the development and use of Fort Monroe as a coastal defense facility and artillery training center including military and community life;*
3. *the fort's role in the Civil War, including as a haven for those escaping enslavement during that war; and*
4. *persons and events associated with the fort which contributed to its and the nation's history and their relevance to modern society.*

The team preliminarily suggests that Building #1 serve as the venue for visitors to understand people and events associated with the history of Old Point Comfort and Fort Monroe. Building #50, along with Casemate #22, could serve as the locations for understanding the history of coastal defense at Old Point Comfort and that of Fort Monroe from its construction through its period of significance. Building# 17 could be the location for visitor understanding of military and community life at the fort using the Lee family, among others, as examples. A section of Building #17 could also be used for administrative purposes. The Parade Ground, as the focal point of the fort, provides a venue for visitors to experience both formal and informal aspects of the fort's history and military character. Casemate #22, without modern intrusions, would permit visitors a stark, self-guided experience of the true mission of the fort as a coastal defense facility.

The team believes that the interpretation focus associated with the historical aspects of the Fort Monroe National Historic Landmark, cited above, be conducted under a unified organizational structure and include the ability to interpret related resources outside of Fort Monroe in nearby locations. Understanding that the FMA is in the process of identifying potential visitor service facilities, the team believes that the Arsenal Building, located on Ingalls Road, is suitable as a potential location for visitor services. Such a facility would serve as a venue for FMA visitor activities and could be jointly operated with another entity charged with primary interpretive responsibilities.

### **Maintenance and Utilities**

The team notes that the Casemate Museum will remain under U.S. Army management through an agreement with the FMA. Under the agreement, the FMA will provide maintenance and utilities to the museum. The team suggests that a similar arrangement be entered into for the provision of such services (maintenance, water, sewer, gas, electricity, snow removal, etc.) by the FMA to the resources of highest value. Additionally, the team believes it important that maintenance protocols employed by the FMA within the primary area of interest, including those undertaken for the historic fortress and casemates, moat, seawalls, and cultural landscapes, meet standards similar to those employed by the National Park Service. Condition assessments of the historic resources of highest value should be undertaken by the FMA in a manner that reflects NPS condition assessment practices.

**Desirable Elements for Resource Protection and Operations**

The team believes that a number of elements, some cited in sections above, would enhance the attraction of an outside entity to administer programming within the primary area of interest.

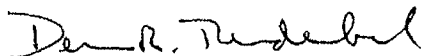
1. Donation of ownership (plus a long-term, leasehold interest in Casemate 22) of the resources of highest value, along with enforceable historic preservation easements on all resources within the primary area of interest.
2. An effective process to ensure that future development and uses within and adjacent to the primary area of interest are compatible with its historic character and enjoyment by visitors.
3. Donation of maintenance services and utilities for the operations and maintenance of the resources of highest value.
4. Maintenance protocols for the fortress and casemates, moat, seawalls, and cultural landscapes to ensure long-term resource sustainability.

We would be pleased to provide a more in-depth briefing to you on the team's findings and to discuss any potential future roles that the NPS might play in the preservation and public understanding of the historically significant resources of Fort Monroe. Should you desire a briefing, please contact Don Hellmann, NPS Assistant Director of Legislative and Congressional Affairs. Mr. Hellmann may be reached at 202-208-5656 or, electronically, at [don\\_hellmann@nps.gov](mailto:don_hellmann@nps.gov).

Should you have questions regarding the team's visit and findings, please contact Terrence D. Moore, Chief of Planning and Compliance for the Northeast Region. Mr. Moore can be reached at 215-597-6412 or, electronically, at [terrence\\_moore@nps.gov](mailto:terrence_moore@nps.gov).

Thank you for your interest in the National Park System.

Sincerely,



Dennis R. Reidenbach  
Regional Director  
Northeast Region

Enclosure