



## PRESERVATION VIRGINIA

### Comments Registered at the National Park Service Public Meeting on 19 July 2011

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

I am Elizabeth Kostelny, Preservation Virginia's Executive Director. I am here to support the establishment of a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe.

Preservation Virginia was founded in 1889 to save Virginia's historic landmarks and places from decay and ruin. Now with more than 6000 members statewide, we continue to support preservation goals as stewards of Historic Jamestowne, Patrick Henry's Scotchtown, John Marshall's Richmond home and through sharing resources with a growing a network of committed organizations and individuals who view our historic places as important to the economic and cultural health of our Commonwealth.

Fort Monroe is a place of extraordinary significance and is distinguished by its unique and irreplaceable historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational values. Fort Monroe is a critical part of our nation's military, maritime and Civil Rights history. John Smith recognized the strategic importance of Point Comfort as early as 1608. Two centuries later, the building of fortifications safeguarded this waterway. During the Civil War, the contraband movement was born after three brave and enslaved men escaped Confederate troops and arrived at Fort Monroe. Their escape inspired others and signaled the end of the slavery in America. Fort Monroe is central to this nation and to this community.

On a personal note as a child growing up in Newport News, for me Fort Monroe is a powerful place. Playing along the shore, visiting in the homes and exploring the fortifications gave me an understanding that history was not about things behind glass or in cases. It instead was about engaging the past and respecting the subtleties that are gained through living with that history all around you.

Preservation Virginia believes that Fort Monroe must be carefully preserved as a vibrant and economically self-sustaining, publicly accessible place where people live, work, and visit—a place to create an ongoing dialogue about our past and our future. This responsibility is enhanced through partnerships on all levels—private and public, federal, state and local government. We appreciate the tremendous efforts of and opportunities provided by the Fort Monroe Authority, the Commonwealth, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and the City of Hampton and especially the leadership of Mayor Ward. We acknowledge the Programmatic Agreement and the Design Guidelines as mechanisms for the long term preservation and economic sustainable of the site.

Preservation Virginia supports the designation of Fort Monroe as a National Monument. With National Park Service involvement, our dialogue of what it means to be an American will be enhanced and sustained. Having the NPS as partner at this significant site will create a model that will emulated nationwide and that will endure

We respectfully urge President Obama to use his authority to create a National Monument at Fort Monroe. Thank you.

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