



George Washington Birthplace National Monument General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement Preliminary Management Alternatives

Newsletter 2, Spring 2011



Remarkable Trees of Virginia
photographer Robert Llewellyn

A Note from the Superintendent

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Washington family began living on land at the mouth of Popes Creek in 1657. George Washington, who was born here in 1732, went on to become our nation's first President in 1789 and at his death in 1799, the commemoration of his life and legacy began. In 1814, George Washington Parke Custis set a stone at this site, which began the lengthy process to create a memorial park at Washington's birthplace. Almost 200 years after his birth, Congress established the George Washington Birthplace National Monument to preserve and interpret the history and resources associated with George Washington, the generations of the Washington family who lived on the Northern Neck, and 18th century plantation life. To support these purposes, provide vision and broad guidance for the park's management over the next 15-20 years, the National Park Service is preparing a General Management Plan (GMP).

Since the GMP planning process began, we met with many of you and asked for your thoughts and ideas. We worked with professionals in natural and cultural resources to

understand what is fundamentally important about the 550 acres we preserve and protect. We listened to

our neighbors, friends, and other interested parties to understand what they value about the park and what they see as its future. The comments we received helped us to understand what is important to you and the scope of the issues to be addressed in the plan. Keeping these issues and ideas in mind, the planning team has crafted preliminary management alternatives, or options for how we will go about protecting the resources of the Birthplace while continuing to interpret the stories of the Birthplace and providing opportunities for the public to enjoy all the park has to offer.

Our planning team will hold an Open House on May 10, 2011, which is the public's opportunity to review the proposed management alternatives. Each of these three management alternatives outlines a distinct approach for how the visiting public would experience the park and how it would be managed. Public participation is vital to the GMP process as it provides an exciting opportunity for all who care about the Park and its resources to envision its future.

Please join us in our effort to shape the park's future by taking a moment to review this newsletter and attend our Open House. Share your thoughts with us on the future of George Washington Birthplace National Monument on our website, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gewagmp> or call 804-224-1732, ext. 262. We need your help to complete the plan.

Sincerely,
Lucy Lawliss
Superintendent



GMP Status

Our planning process began with developing a foundation statement reflecting the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, and its interpretive themes. The foundation statement helps keep the park's management focused on what is most important about this place and the reasons why Congress established it as a national monument in 1930. The planning team analyzed the current condition of our resources, which include structures, landscapes, and museum collections as well as existing and potential threats to these resources. The baseline information, coupled with input from the public, provided the planning team with direction to develop draft management alternatives, which are presented here for your consideration. We now invite our partners and the public to review these alternatives and share your comments with us. With that input, the alternatives will be analyzed for impacts to the social, cultural and natural environments and the results will be presented in the Draft General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement. At that time, a "best" or "preferred" alternative will be identified.

Park Purpose

The park purpose is derived from the park's enabling legislation and states why the park was established as a unit of the National Park System. It is among the core elements that compose the foundation statement for the park.

The purpose of George Washington Birthplace National Monument is to:

- Preserve the historical associations at the Park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people
- Preserve and interpret the history and resources associated with George Washington, the generations of the Washington family who lived in the vicinity, and their contemporaries, as well as 18th c. plantation life and society

Park Significance

Significance statements explain why the park's resources and features are important enough to merit national park designation.

Significance Statement #1:

George Washington Birthplace contains the historic core and other lands of the family plantation on which George Washington, the nation's first president, was born.

Significance Statement #2:

George Washington Birthplace is associated with the generations of the Washington family, beginning with the arrival of George Washington's great-grandfather around 1660, and with their contemporaries on the site and in the vicinity. The site reveals the land and water features that led to colonial settlement of the site, contributed to plantation operations in the 18th century, and influenced the longevity of agricultural use.

Significance Statement #3:

George Washington Birthplace memorializes the country's first president. The site, a principal outcome of the bicentennial celebration that culminated in 1932, reflects Washington's continuing symbolic significance to the nation.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are the features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other resources and values determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management because they are critical to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance. These resources and values should collectively capture the essence of the park.

Fundamental Resources

- Archeological resources from the Washington era
- Historic structures and cultural landscape layers from the Washington era (1657-1814) through the commemorative period (1814 – 1976)
- Museum collections
- Washington family burial ground
- Views and vistas within the park

Fundamental Values

- Views and vistas from the park to the historic rural agricultural scene
- Proximity to Potomac River and Popes Creek
- Historic rural setting
- Ethnographic resources

Other Important and Related Resources

Important resources are not fundamental to the park's purpose and significance but have been determined to be important. Related resources are relevant to the park but located outside the park's boundary.

Important Resources

- Archeological resources and collections related to Native Americans
- Natural resources
- 18th century period furniture collection
- Soundscape
- Night sky
- Chesapeake Bay access

Related Resources

- Lands associated with the Washington plantation and Washington contemporaries

Interpretive Themes

Primary interpretive themes describe broad concepts to be interpreted to provide people and visitors with opportunities to understand and appreciate park resources.

George Washington's Leadership

As a leader of the American Revolution and the nation's first president, Washington's life places him at the center of events critical to the creation of the United States, and his actions were often precedent-setting. His leadership in the military and in politics throughout his career and to the end of his life engendered respect, trust, and confidence among many Americans, supporting, sustaining, and encouraging others' efforts to establish the United States as an independent nation.

This theme focuses on the life of George Washington, his life and contributions, and the continuum of his achievements.

Virginia's Northern Neck—the Location of George Washington's Birth—and its Place in the 18th Century Atlantic World

George Washington was born on the periphery of the English-speaking world; the perception of his birthplace as isolated belies the complex, sophisticated, Atlantic world in which George Washington was born and raised; this was a colonial society based on abundant natural resources and international trade in agricultural commodities, influenced by a mix of and tension between cultures and traditions, shaped by its uses of free and enslaved labor, and fundamentally connected to the global scale of 18th century trade and politics.

This theme focuses on the history of the place, the generations of the Washington family and their contemporaries, neighbors, the enslaved, and Native Americans—the contexts into which Washington was born. The water, land and agriculture are typical of a Northern Neck 'place' whose location and setting offered opportunities and drew people there.



Americans have remembered George Washington in ways that have both reflected and shaped their political and cultural life

For more than two centuries, commemoration of George Washington has honored (and sometimes embellished) his legacy and accomplishments but more importantly, efforts to commemorate Washington have reflected larger currents of American history as some sought to use his memory as a touchstone to promote their vision of what it means to be American.

The content for this theme is complementary to the first theme, on the life and contributions of George Washington—and moves us forward into understanding what it is about Washington that led to this impulse towards commemoration, even during his lifetime.

Planning Considerations for the Action Alternatives

Planning consideration are a summary of the major ideas that were generated as part of our scoping process - conversations the planning team had within the National Park Service and activities external to the NPS such as through scholars roundtables on historic and natural resources and through meetings with the public.

Resource Protection

The preservation of the Park’s historic structures, archeological resources and cultural landscape was identified as an issue to be considered in the GMP. Coastline erosion, particularly along Popes Creek, was also identified. Local development trends that could impact the historic rural setting of the Park have also been identified as potentially impacting the resources of the Park.

Visitor Experience

Scoping meetings revealed a desire to expand the visitor’s experience at George Washington’s Birthplace. Issues identified included a desire to provide more visitor experiences beyond the historic core within the Park, expand access to the Park through various means including water trails such as the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and build connections between the Birthplace and other sites related to George Washington. George Washington

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association



Birthplace NM includes resources related to the life of Washington as well as his commemoration and there is a desire for the Park to do a better job of explaining and balancing the interpretation of these two themes. Lastly, the GMP should address deficiencies in the Visitor Center and Maintenance Facilities in order to enhance resource protection and the experience of Park visitors.



Park Boundary

Federal law directs the NPS to evaluate the need to adjust a park’s boundary during the GMP. The park is in the process of determining whether an adjustment to the park’s boundary is needed to accommodate the actions explored in the alternatives and help fulfill the park’s purpose.

Draft Management Alternatives

The following draft management alternatives were developed by the NPS Planning team taking into consideration the park’s enabling legislation, the park purpose and significance, extensive public input, the condition of the park resources, and the park’s goals and planning issues. These alternatives represent ideas and concepts being considered. They are not intended to describe the full content of the alternative but rather provide enough detail to enable the reader to understand how one alternative differs from another.

Public input is critical at this time and will assist the NPS in the process of refining the alternatives for presentation in the formal draft document. The NPS is interested in learning about the ideas you support and those with which you have concerns, and most importantly, please let us know why you support or are concerned about them. As part of preparing the draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS), the NPS will identify its “preferred alternative.” The selection of the preferred alternative is based on several factors including the results of the environmental impact analysis, public comments, and how well the proposals meet the park’s purpose and significance. The preferred alternative can be one of the alternatives presented in this newsletter or some combination thereof. Public participation in the process at this time will play an important role in the selection of the preferred alternative.

Once complete, implementation of the final GMP will be dependent upon the availability of funds. Proposed construction projects, for example, would have to compete for funds through the NPS’ normal priority setting processes for funding.

Alternative 1: Continuation of Current Management

The park would continue to manage park resources and visitor use as it does today, with no major change in direction. The park's enabling legislation, the existing master plan, and other implementation plans would continue to guide management decision-making. The park will continue to preserve and interpret the life and legacy of George Washington and the society and times in which he lived. An alternative proposing continuation of current management practices is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and serves as the baseline for evaluating and comparing the other proposed alternatives.

Resource Protection

The Park would continue to preserve the historic structures, cultural landscapes, and archeological resources. The Park would continue to address water quality in Popes Creek as well as bank erosion and local development trends and adjacent land uses within existing authorities.

Visitor Experience

Visitors to the Park would continue to center their experience in the Park's historic core through opportunities focused on the life and legacy of George Washington and the times in which he lived. Visitors would continue to have limited opportunities for passive recreation throughout the Park's 550 acres.

Park Operations and Facilities

Current Park staffing levels and existing facilities would remain as is and the Park would continue to own and manage the 18th century heritage breed farm animals.

Actions Common to the Following Alternatives 2 and 3

Resource Protection

In both action alternatives, the Park would manage natural resources to support cultural resource objectives, maintain the diversity of species, and for habitat protection. The rehabilitation of agricultural fields in a sustainable manner is also proposed for both action alternatives.

Visitor Experience

The Park would take steps to prepare for the 300th anniversary of the birth of George Washington in 2032. Both action alternatives also propose to expand the experience of visitors beyond the Park's historic core through programming and passive recreation such as non-motorized watercraft. The



Then & Now:
Above, a young girl practices lawn bowling. Below, students learn surveying techniques using equipment similar to Washington's surveying compass. (p. 4)



action alternatives also further the experience beyond Park boundaries by providing different opportunities to connect to related resources.

Park Operations and Facilities

Both action alternatives propose to rehabilitate and/or expand the Visitor Center and Maintenance Facilities of the Park to further resource protection within and enhance visitor experience to the Park. Both alternatives propose to improve energy efficiency and sustainable practices in all aspects of facility improvement projects and park operations.

Working with Partners to Preserve Related Lands

The rural agricultural setting of the Park contributes significantly to the understanding of Popes Creek Plantation as the site of George Washington's birth and as such, the Park will work with partners to protect adjacent lands and the approach to the Park along Route 204.



Alternative 2: The Birthplace and the Washington Era

This alternative would emphasize the contexts into which Washington was born at Popes Creek Plantation. The Park would share the history of the place, the generations of the Washington family and their contemporaries, neighbors, the enslaved, and Native Americans who lived on the Northern Neck. Park resources, such as water, land and agriculture, are typical of the colonial-era in the Northern Neck where location and setting offered opportunities and drew new settlement. The Park would expand its archeological investigations in the pursuit of a greater depth and breadth of knowledge of the people who lived at this place in order to enhance the Park's visitor experience.

Resource Protection

The Park's historic structures would be rehabilitated to provide for the interpretation of the Washington family plantation and colonial plantation life. The Memorial House and other historic structures within the historic core would be rehabilitated to interpret the Washington era at Popes Creek Plantation. The Log House would be rehabilitated as a multi-purpose space for education and Park programming. The Park would pursue new archeological investigations to enhance the authenticity of the interpretive programs, including by telling the story of the enslaved population at the Washington plantation. These archeological investigations would enable the Park to pursue new interpretive opportunities such as the creation of ghost structures at the John Washington home site or interpretive devices at slave

quarters and other resources. The Park's collection policy would reflect this focus on the colonial era and concentrate on Washington era resources. The heritage breed farm animals would continue to be owned and managed by the NPS but under this alternative, the breeds represented would be expanded to enhance the 18th century interpretation.

Visitor Experience

Park visitors would be immersed in an 18th century colonial experience to appreciate the world

into which George Washington was born. The Park would enhance programming to provide an understanding of the relevance of 18th century ways to contemporary life including dependence on natural resources during the Washington era and the trend toward more sustainable agricultural practices today, particularly as it relates to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The Park would expand interpretation of the plantation beyond the historic core through passive recreational opportunities such as an Exploration Trail, Plantation Archeological Trail, and through traditional access to the plantation lands via waterways. The Park would also expand the visitor experience beyond the Park boundary through partnerships with others, creating opportunities to learn about the 18th century colonial experience on the Northern Neck, as well as other sites related to George Washington's life and legacy.

Park Operations and Facilities

In support of the Park's enhanced archeological investigations, this alternative proposes the expansion of the existing collections storage facility to house an archeology lab. The Park would increase staffing levels to provide additional support for the expanded archeological program, as well as to respond to the public interest in the heritage breed farm animals, and to enhance the Park's ability to provide enhanced interpretive opportunities.

Boundary

The Park would pursue a boundary adjustment to the south of the Visitor Center to protect the historic agricultural view. The Park will also work in partnership with others to protect views from the Park to adjacent lands.

Alternative 3: Leadership & Legacy

This alternative would emphasize the continuum of the commemoration of George Washington and provide expanded opportunities for use of all Park areas and resources. The Birthplace memorializes the country's first president. The site, a principal outcome of the bicentennial celebration that culminated in 1932, reflects Washington's continuing symbolic significance to the nation. This alternative would tell the story of Washington and his family at this site through the existing archeological resources and landscape, and expand the story of the commemoration and memorialization of Washington through the commemorative structures and landscapes of the Park and to sites beyond the Park boundary.

Resource Protection

The preservation of the Park's historic resources would be focused on both the historic layers related to the Washington era, as well as the subsequent commemorative resources. The historic structures within the historic core would be rehabilitated to interpret commemoration at the Birthplace and other locations. The Memorial House would be rehabilitated as in Alternative 2 but would highlight the commemoration of Washington's life and leadership. The Log House would be rehabilitated as a multi-purpose space including space for a concessionaire. The cultural landscapes in the historic core and the burial ground would be rehabilitated to their 1930s appearance. Archeological resources would continue to be preserved, but new investigations would not be pursued. New museum collections at the Park would focus on the commemoration of George Washington.

Visitor Experience

The Park's interpretive program would be predicated on existing historical information so that visitors will understand the life and leadership of George Washington and would be expanded to focus on how he has been commemorated at this place and elsewhere. The visitor experience would be expanded to have passive recreational opportunities for education and interpretation focusing on the commemorative period through improvements such as a new Commemorative Trail and an enhanced Nature Trail. The visitor would have the greatest opportunity through this alternative to understand related commemorative sites and understand the life and commemoration of George Washington.

Park Operations and Facilities

Unique to this alternative is the proposal that the heritage breed farm animals will be managed through an

agricultural lease or partnership so that the animals will still be available to enhance the visitor experience as a backdrop rather than a major Park function. The Park would have the ability to provide certain structures within the historic core for partner use and the Log House for a concession. The Park would establish a parking area near the obelisk to enhance the visitor experience of this major commemorative feature of the Park. Park staffing would increase to provide support to enhance the Park's ability to meet the Park purpose, policies and mandates.

Boundary

No Boundary adjustment would be proposed under this alternative.

The Park will actively work with others to protect the view south from the Visitor Center. The Park will also work with others to protect the views and vistas from the Park to adjacent lands and across Popes Creek and the Potomac River.





National Park Service
Department of the Interior

You're invited to a Public Open House.
Join us May 10, 2011 from 3-7pm at
George Washington Birthplace National Monument.



Project Schedule

Public Open House	May 10, 2011
Internal Review of Draft GMP	Summer 2011
Public Review of Draft GMP/EIS	Fall 2011
Final GMP/EIS	Spring 2012

Project website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gewagmp>

GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL MONUMENT
1732 Popes Creek Road
Washington's Birthplace, VA 22443