

Summary, Environmental Assessment - Replacement of Interpretive Shelters

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park proposes to replace three existing interpretive shelters located on the battlefield. The current shelters, constructed in 1967, are of such size and prominence on the battlefield that they immediately draw attention to themselves, as opposed to the battlefield itself. The shelters are approximately 9 feet tall, 32 feet across, circular structures with steel support posts and flat, gravel roofs. Two of the three shelters are placed in the mowed battlefield. The third shelter is located at the edge of the tree line at the top of a hill, overlooking the Tohopeka Village site.

If implemented, the preferred alternative considered in the Environmental Assessment (EA) would replace the three existing shelters with smaller stone and wood shelters. The overall effect would be of a small lean-to or open hut constructed of earthen materials. The proposed replacements would be approximately 16 feet deep, 24 feet wide, and 9½ feet tall at the front. They would be roofed with a recycled-product artificial wooden shake. This product is based on recycled rubber and plastics, is fairly maintenance free, has a 50 year life span, and looks very much like real wood shake.

The preferred alternative contains the following specific elements. The Tohopeka Village Overlook shelter would be replaced at the same location with no change in surrounding vegetation. The Cotton-patch Hill shelter would be replaced at the same location, but with a modification of the tree line in order to screen the shelter. The shelter at Gun Hill would be relocated approximately 60 feet to move it off the mowed battlefield, to the edge of the tree line.

The objectives of this proposal are: to minimize the visual impact of the structures on the landscape; provide protection from the hot summer sun, thunderstorms and lightning; select the best locations to understand the course of the battle; and to minimize disruption to the natural environment. This would be accomplished by reducing the size of the structures; placing them at the edge of the tree line; and building with materials which would blend into the tree line surrounding the battlefield.

The Alabama State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO) has given a preliminary concurrence of no adverse effect to the concept of replacing the current shelters to meet the objectives described above. Tribal representatives have been involved in initial discussions concerning this proposal. Both the SHPO and the culturally affiliated Tribes

The Purpose of an Environmental Assessment (EA)

There are three primary purposes of an EA:

- To help determine whether the impact of a proposed action or alternative could be significant, thus indicating that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is needed;
- To aid in compliance with NEPA when no EIS is necessary by evaluating a proposal that will have no significant impacts, but that may have measurable adverse impacts; and
- To facilitate preparation of an EIS if one is necessary.

will be asked to review this EA for purposes of compliance with the park's §106 National Historic Preservation Act obligations.

The proposed action would have no effect on water resources; wildlife; threatened, endangered or special concern species; air quality; lightscares; soundscapes; Indian trust resources; park operations; museum collections; public health and safety; socioeconomic impacts; environmental justice / protection of children; resource conservation; prime and unique farmlands; and wilderness.

Impacts to geology, topography, vegetation and soils would be minor, and localized. Impacts to cultural, archeological and ethnographic resources; and to cultural landscapes would be minor with no adverse effect. Construction related impacts to visitor experience would be short-term and minor in intensity. Beneficial impacts to visitor experience would be long-term and moderate in intensity.

Note to Reviewers and Respondents

If you wish to comment on the EA/assessment of effect, you may mail comments to the name and address below. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. **Please ensure all comments are received by the park no later than December 6, 2004.**

Please Address Comments to:

Mark Lewis, Superintendent
Horseshoe Bend National Military Park
11288 Horseshoe Bend Road
Daviston, AL 36256

Or you may e-mail comments to: HOBE_Superintendent@nps.gov