

New Planning Study Underway at Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

For many of us, the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery holds a special place in our hearts. Thousands of people visit the site each year to honor those Americans who fought at the Battle of New Orleans or served nobly in the U.S. Military and interred at the historic cemetery.

The National Park Service (NPS) is privileged to have helped preserve Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery since 1939. As we move forward into the 21st century, the NPS is undertaking a new planning study to examine potential management and development alternatives for the future. This newsletter provides a brief introduction to the planning process and describes several ways that you can be involved.

Your thoughts and ideas are important to us. How might we enhance a visitor's understanding of the park's national significance? What types of recreational activities are appropriate at the park and at what levels? How can we best work with our neighbors to address problems that affect both the park and surrounding community? What can we do to better protect and interpret the park's historic resources. What additional park facilities are needed, if any, and where should they be located?

Our goal is to develop a plan that continues to protect the park's cultural and natural resources, meets the needs of our visitors, and addresses the concerns of our neighbors. To achieve this, we will work closely with the citizens of Chalmette, the St. Bernard Parish government, other state and federal agencies, private landowners, interest groups, and the general public. The final product of this planning effort will guide management and development decisions at Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery for the next 20 years.

As always, I appreciate your interest and look forward to working with you on this very important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geraldine Smith".

Geraldine Smith, Superintendent
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve

What is planning and how will it affect the future of Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery?

Planning is a decision making process. In the National Park Service, a combined General Management Plan Amendment (GMP) and Development Concept Plan (DCP) are used to create a future vision for the park and establish a practical framework for decision making. The completed GMP amendment and DCP at Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery will describe how to best protect park resources, provide quality visitor experiences, manage visitation and visitor use, and serve as a blueprint for future park development.

The Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery GMP/DCP will be conducted by a team of NPS park managers and technical experts. Public participation will play a central role in the decision making process. The planning team will consult with other knowledgeable persons inside and outside the NPS, the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force, and any other interested groups or persons from the general public before developing its final recommendations.

As part of the study, the NPS will analyze existing conditions and future possibilities at the park. A full range of potential management and design alternatives will be developed and their impacts rigorously explored. In making decisions, the NPS will seek, to the extent possible, to reach agreement among the park staff, the NPS leadership, other agencies with jurisdiction by law or expertise, and the public on the most appropriate path forward. An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to help everyone better understand the advantages and disadvantages associated with each course of action and serve as the basis for selecting a preferred alternative.

As might be expected, some of the things that different people will want to happen at the park will be mutually compatible and others will not. The most appropriate mix of these wants will be determined by the NPS planning team based on the best information available and a systematic analysis of resource values and land uses.

What is the Chalmette Battlefield Task Force?

The Chalmette Battlefield Task Force is a Federal Advisory Commission created by the Secretary of the Interior to provide the NPS with recommendations about potential improvements to the park.

The Task Force is composed of representatives from State and local governments and citizens of St. Bernard Parish. The NPS planning team has been working closely with the Task Force to identify important management and development issues that should be addressed in the plan.

There are currently 11 persons actively serving on the Task Force:

Ms. Elizabeth McDougal, Committee Chairperson,
 Capt. Bonnie Pepper Cook, Com. Vice Chairperson
 Mr. Eric Cager
 Mrs. George W. Davis
 Mr. Anthony A. Fernandez, Jr.
 Mr. Alvin W. Guillot
 Mr. Drew Heaphy
 Ms. Faith Moran
 Mr. Paul V. Perez
 Col. John F. Pugh, Jr.
 Ms. Geraldine Smith

The Task Force met about 6 times in 2003. Its members will continue to meet until the commission's charter expires in August 2004. Most members of the Task force live and work in Chalmette or St. Bernard Parish. The NPS planning team encourages you to share any ideas or concerns freely with them. Task Force members would be delighted to bring your ideas to our attention at the next Task Force meeting.

Where are we now in the planning process?

There are typically four steps in planning: "scoping" or information gathering; alternative development and analysis; preparation and publication of a draft plan/environmental impact statement; and revision of the draft and publication of a final plan/environmental impact statement.

The planning project timetable below highlights these steps, anticipated completion dates, and additional opportunities for public involvement.

Project Timetable		
Step	Date	Public Involvement
1. Gather Information	Winter - Spring 2004	Newsletter, response form, public open house meetings
2. Develop and evaluate alternatives	Spring - Summer 2004	Newsletter, response form, public review, public meetings
3. Prepare and publish draft plan and EIS	Summer - Fall 2004	Public distribution of draft plan, response form, public review, public meetings
4. Revise and publish final plan and EIS	Winter - 2005	Newsletter, public distribution of final plan

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Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and PreserveNational Park Service
U.S. Department of the InteriorChalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery
General Management Plan Amendment and Development Concept Plan

ANNOUNCEMENT

General Management Plan Amendment and Development Concept Plan

Public Meetings Scheduled for Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery Planning Study

Public open house meetings will be held on January 27 and January 29, 2004 in Chalmette Louisiana.

Persons attending the meetings are encouraged to visit one or more information stations set up at the meeting location to learn about the planning process and express their ideas, questions, and concerns directly to an NPS representative. The focus of these meetings is to document the concerns, issues, expectations, or values of existing and potential visitors, park neighbors, people with traditional cultural ties to the land, park concessionaires, cooperating associations, scientists and scholars, and other governmental agencies.

Open house meetings are designed to promote informal information sharing between visitors and NPS planners. A prepared presentation by the NPS will not be part of the program and potential visitors are encouraged to come and go at their convenience anytime during the two hour meeting session.

Meeting Dates, Times, and Locations

Tuesday, January 27, 2004

Location:

Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center, 6806 St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, Louisiana 70043

Time:

2:00pm to 4:00pm. Come and go at your leisure, open house meeting format

Thursday, January 29, 2004

Location:

Council Chambers, St. Bernard Parish Government Complex, 8425 W. Judge Perez Drive, Chalmette, Louisiana 70043

Time:

6:00pm to 8:00pm. Come and go at your leisure, open house meeting format

For additional information please contact Dee Landry at
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Headquarters
telephone: 504-589-3882 ext. 123 • website: www.nps.gov/jela • email: dee_landry@nps.gov

How you can participate in the planning process

Public involvement is critical to the success of this project. The planning team encourages all:

- existing and potential park visitors
- park neighbors
- people with traditional cultural ties to lands within the park
- park concessionaires
- cooperating associations
- scientists and scholars
- other government agencies

to share their comments, suggestions, concerns, issues, expectations, or ideas about future management and development options at the park.

Written Comments

We are pleased to accept written comments in any form or format you wish to submit them. Handwritten responses on plain paper will be accepted as readily as computer generated responses printed on official letterhead.

You can help us better understand your interests and concerns by answering the questions on the postage paid response form included in this newsletter. The response form is also available at various locations throughout the park and can be downloaded from the project web site (www.nps.gov/jela).

Written comments should be sent via U.S. mail to:

Planning and Compliance Division - Chalmette
Southeast Regional Office
National Park Service
100 Alabama Street, 6th Floor, 1924 Building
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Telephone Information

Persons interested in receiving additional newsletters, periodic email updates, or other information about the project are encouraged to call Dee Landry at 504-589-3882 ext. 123. We encourage persons with highly detailed ideas or comments to submit them in writing so they can be considered in their full context.

Public Meetings

Several public meetings will be held over the course of the project. Our first series of public meetings will be conducted in an open house format and focus on

explaining the planning process and listening to what visitors have to say about the park.

The project's first two public meetings will take place on January 27 and 29, 2004 in Chalmette, Louisiana. The meetings will be open house format and no formal presentation will be given. Instead, persons attending will be encouraged to visit one or more information stations to learn about the planning process and express their ideas, questions, and concerns directly to an NPS representative. Feel free to come and go as you wish anytime during the two hour meeting time. More information about meeting times and locations is provided on page 3 of this newsletter.

Newsletters

Several newsletters will be published to help people stay informed about public meetings, discussions, draft alternatives, and other important project information. It is easy to add your name to our mailing list. Just provide your full mailing address or email address by telephone, U.S. mail, email, or in person the next time you visit the park.

Email

Comments and questions can be submitted by email to the planning team at dee_landry@nps.gov.

Website

Point your web browser to the project web site at www.nps.gov/jela for additional information about the planning process, public meetings, newsletters, and to access other on-line information. Downloadable copies of response forms, newsletters, draft plans, and the final plan will be available from the web site as they are completed.

Park Mission

Each unit of the national park system is provided management guidance by the presidential proclamation or congressional legislation that authorizes and establishes it as a part of the national park system. This guidance is interpreted and expressed by the NPS as the park's mission.

Park mission contains three kinds of statements: mission, purpose, and significance which, collectively, establish the foundation for sound decision-making at the park. We invite you to review the following statements and let us know of any comments or concerns you may have regarding them.



Mission Statement:

The Chalmette Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve is dedicated to commemorating the lives and stories of those soldiers and civilians who participated in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. Their legacy and contribution to American independence is honored through the interpretation of historic and contemporary cultural resources at the Chalmette Battlefield and Chalmette National Cemetery.

Purpose Statements:

Purpose statements reaffirm the reasons for which the park was set aside as part of the national park system. They are intended to document NPS’s assumptions about what the park’s establishing legislation really means so that those assumptions can be understood by others.

The purpose of Chalmette Battlefield and Chalmette National Cemetery is:

- to honor and commemorate those who fought and died to preserve American independence at the Battle of New Orleans
- to care for and manage the archeological artifacts, historic structures, and other objects of historic and scientific importance for the benefit of future generations through preservation, interpretation, education, and inspiration

Significance Statements:

A significance statement(s) clearly describes the regional, national, or global significance of those park resources that preserve a portion of America’s heritage. Their purpose is to help the NPS identify what is most important about the park and prioritize the allocation of limited funding and staff resources accordingly.

The Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery is significant because it:

- contains archeological and cultural landscape remnants of one of the most significant battlefields of the War of 1812
- commemorates a dramatic turning point in the development of the United States where European influence on the Mississippi River was ended and the path for western migration and settlement opened
- is associated with the military actions of Andrew Jackson who, as a result of his stunning victory at the Battle of New Orleans, became a national hero and began his political journey to the 7th U.S. Presidency
- honors and memorializes the military service of over 10 generations of American soldiers

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS

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Bernard Highway, Chalmette, Louisiana 70043

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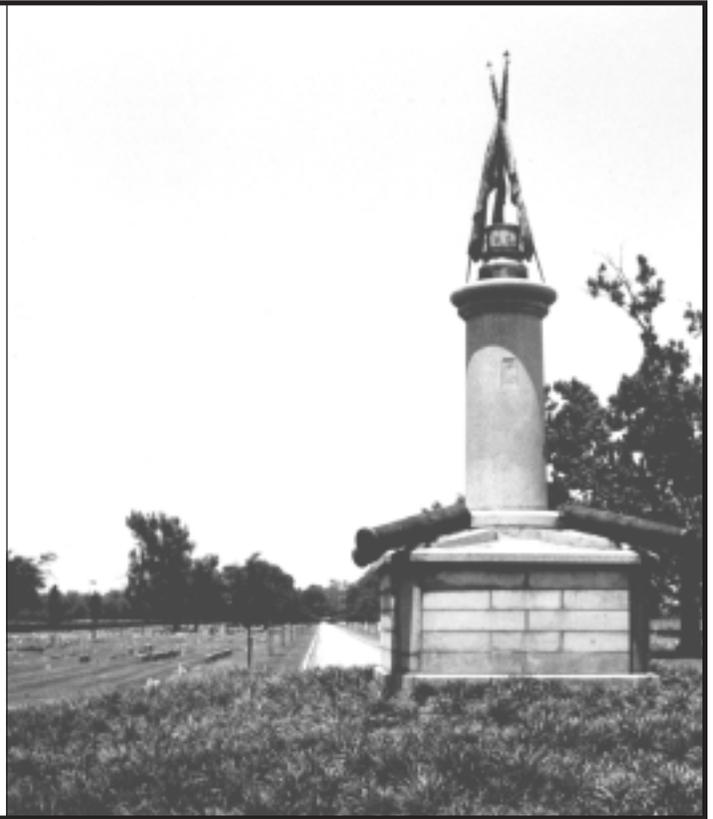
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