



Vicksburg National Military Park Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment June 2009

*From the
Superintendent -*

Friends,



Since we last met in April 2008, the Vicksburg National Military Park team has chosen the preferred alternative for landscape management as part of the ongoing development of a Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment.

Through the process known as “Choosing By Advantage (CBA)”, the interdisciplinary team for this project selected the alternative that would best meet the objectives established for this undertaking. This decision has now been reflected in two detailed documents covering the cultural landscape treatment plan and the environmental assessment, including mitigation measures.

We now invite you to review the preferred alternative treatment plan and environmental assessment and provide your comments. We want your opinion on how well the alternative achieves the desired objectives. This newsletter provides details of the upcoming open house and instructions for submitting your comments.

We will consider your comments and make adjustments to the preferred alternative before finalizing the documents.

We sincerely thank you for your feedback as we move forward. Please attend the open house to learn more and submit your comments on-line, through the mail, or at the public meeting. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Monika Mayr
Superintendent
Vicksburg National Military Park*

PURPOSE

The NPS proposes to implement the recommendations in the Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) so that the park meets its mandate to “commemorate the campaign, siege and defense of Vicksburg, and to preserve the history of the battles and operations of the siege and defense on the ground where they were fought and were carried on . . .” This plan seeks to provide a clear direction to manage the landscape in ways that commemorate the campaign, siege and defense of Vicksburg by preserving resources and enhancing visitor understanding and appreciation of the events that occurred

Open House and Submitting Comments

Vicksburg National Military Park will hold an open house to present the purpose and need for the study and the draft alternatives for the Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment, and request public input and comments.

**Date: June 16, 2009
Time: 3:30 – 6:30 pm
Place: Vicksburg National Military Park
Address: 3201 Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183
(disabled accessible)**

Comments may also be submitted by June 30, 2009 using the form on page 4 of this newsletter, or submitted electronically to the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) web site at the following web address:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/VICK/>

Faxed comments, e-mails, and telephone messages will not be accepted.

here, while providing a variety of experiences and complying with required laws and regulations.

OBJECTIVES

Of the park’s 1800 acres, 550 are currently open grasslands which cost approximately \$160,000/year to maintain. The Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) and Environmental Assessment (EA) are being developed to help the park better achieve its purposes called for in the enabling legislation. Objectives of the combined undertaking are:

1. To facilitate understanding and interpretation of the park story including the campaign, siege and defense and secondary themes including context, commemoration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps,
2. To encourage visitors to experience history up close,
3. To protect physical features and resources from degradation,
4. To provide opportunities for a variety of visitor experiences while maintaining the historic character and integrity of the landscape and managing visitor use conflicts, and
5. To develop sustainable ways of maintaining the landscape.



Prescribed burn, Fort Garrott – February 2009

ALTERNATIVES

All treatment alternatives considered for Vicksburg National Military Park would affect resources, maintenance, resource protection, and interpretation. To improve understanding of the defensive fortifications, all alternatives include the provision of returning the tour route to its original configuration, where visitors would be directed to the Confederate lines first.

During a June 2008 CBA workshop, the full range of draft alternatives (listed below) for landscape rehabilitation were evaluated and the preferred alternative, Alternative C, was chosen.

Alternative A - Continue Existing Management (No-Action)

Under this alternative, the park would continue to maintain its present landscape patterns and features and the management and maintenance practices that sustain them. No mitigation would be required for this alternative.



Cannon Vista Blocked by Trees – South Fort 2009

Alternative B - Preservation through Best Management Practices (BMPs)

As part of this alternative, the park would take steps to protect remaining evidence of the Civil War siege, including remaining landform and topography, earthworks, road traces and corridors, and archaeological resources. Accordingly, the primary actions to be undertaken include preventing erosion and removing exotic plants by implementing appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) (*Note: Specific BMPs will be identified as this alternative undergoes further development.*) Advanced technology and media would be used to enhance interpretation along with additional exhibits and waysides. Mitigation required for this alternative would include the implementation of BMPs.

Alternative C – Rehabilitate and Maintain Areas of Key Military Engagements

This alternative enhances interpretation of the 1863 siege by rehabilitating areas of key military engagements. Rehabilitation involves removing woodland cover and maintaining the landscape in a more open and visually accessible state. In this alternative, the goal is to remove the least woodland cover needed to reveal the most important historic landscape relationships in areas of key military engagements. This alternative also provides for additional interpretive exhibits and devices to support visitor understanding of the events of 1863. In addition, walking trails to natural features would be maintained by the community. Approximately 90 acres of clearing would be proposed. The mitigation required for this alternative would include implementing BMPs during and after clearing; monitoring changes in birds, mammals, water, reptiles, and plants to detect changes and determine if modifications are needed for subsequent phases of clearing; reforesting approximately 20 - 25 acres of currently cleared areas, and removing exotic plants from 22 acres of forested wetlands.



Revegetated Riparian Buffer – Railroad Redoubt, July 2008

Alternative D – Rehabilitate and Maintain the Broad Spectrum of Military Engagements

This alternative focuses on enhancing the legibility of the park's Civil War-era resources and associations by removing woodland cover from large continuous areas. Approximately 347 acres of clearing would be proposed. Additional waysides and walking trails to military features would enhance interpretation for visitors.

Furthermore, walking trails to natural features would be maintained by the community. The mitigation required for this alternative would include implementing BMPs during and after clearing; monitoring changes in birds, mammals, water, reptiles, amphibians, and

plants to detect changes and determine if modifications are needed for subsequent phases of clearing; reforesting approximately 20 - 25 acres of currently cleared areas, and removing exotic plants from 22 acres of forested wetlands.

Alternatives No Longer Under Consideration

Two additional alternatives were considered but are no longer under consideration - Restoration to Civil War Siege Period (ca. 1863), and Restoration to Park Development Period (1899-1917). Implementation of either of these alternatives would require exceptions to be made for the inclusion of features that do not date to the specified restoration period, such as commemorative monuments, the Visitor Center, and the *USS Cairo* exhibit, which would negate the guiding concept of the alternative.



Coonskin Tower – 3^d Louisiana Redan ca. 1863

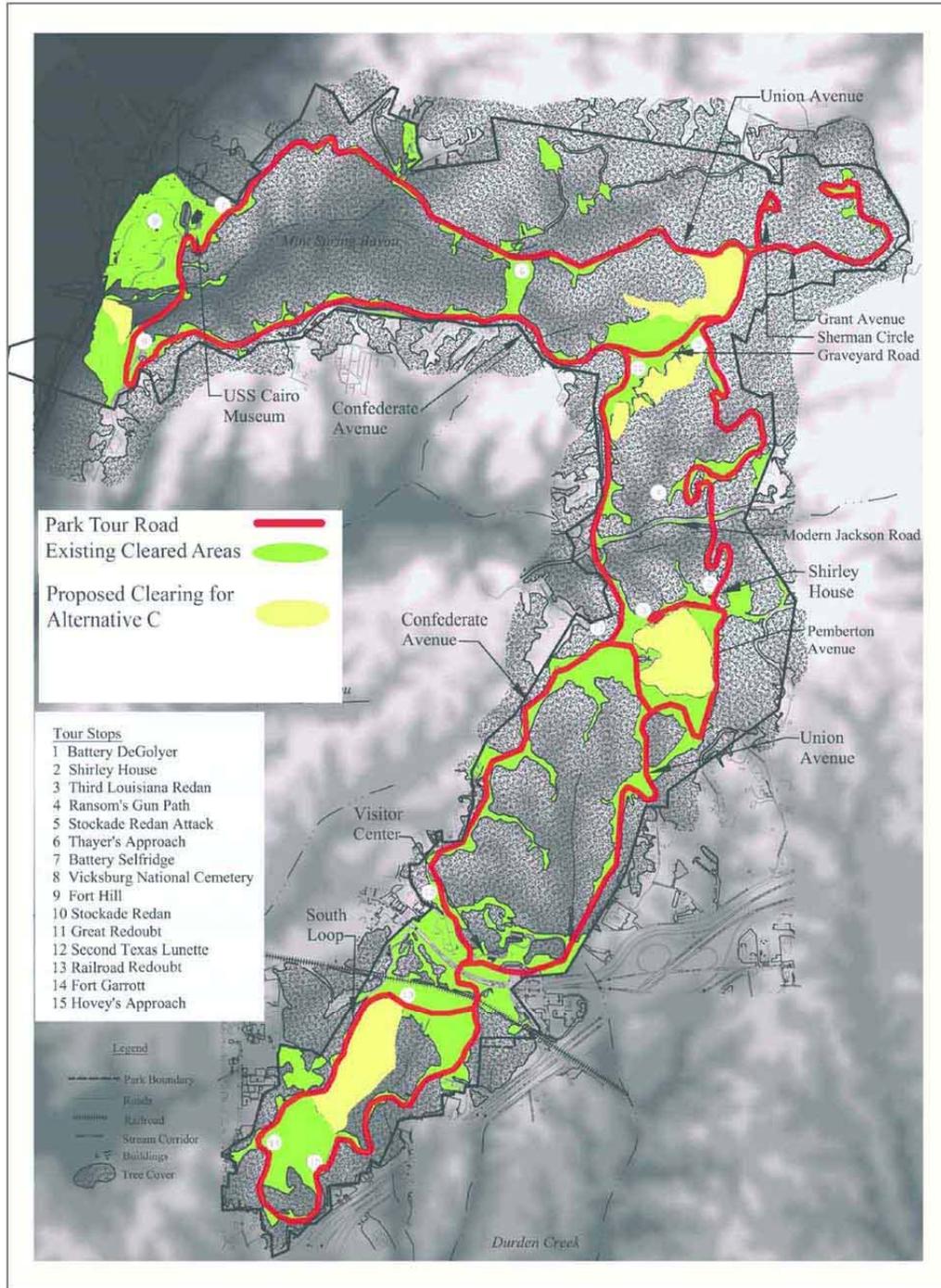
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative C would entail rehabilitation of areas of key military engagement, including clearing 90 acres of currently forested landscape for an estimated cost of \$1,033,500 with annual maintenance, patrol, and exotic plant management costing \$225,700.



Revegetation at Fort Garrott – April 2009

**PROPOSED REHABILITATION AREAS FOR THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE,
ALTERNATIVE C**



Source: Aerial Base Map, USGS Topographic Data

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