National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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Public Meeting to Review Fire Island National Seashore's Plans for Return of Fresnel Lens Rescheduled For April 21

Patchogue, NY— Fire Island National Seashore's public meeting to discuss plans for displaying the Fire Island Lighthouse's historic Fresnel lens has been rescheduled for Saturday, April 21, 2007, from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Fire Island Lighthouse, located at the eastern end of Robert Moses Parkway on Fire Island. Parking is available at Robert Moses State Park Field 5, with a ¾ mile walk to the Keepers Quarters at the base of the historic lighthouse. The meeting was postponed from Sunday, April 15 due to the weather. A 30- day period of public review period is still open through April 30, 2007.

The historic lens is now crated and in storage. The first order Fresnel lens had been removed from the Fire Island Lighthouse in 1933, then displayed at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia from 1939 - 2000. The public meeting has been scheduled to provide an opportunity to discuss any issues associated with the Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect (EA/AoE) that coincides with Fire Island National Seashore's plans to return this original first order Fresnel lens to the Fire Island Light Station. The project entails the construction of exhibit space to protect, display and interpret an original artifact associated with the Fire Island Lighthouse.

Several feasible alternatives were considered. Alternative B, which proposes to build a new compatible structure on the existing foundation of the Power Generation Building and move the Boat House to its 1939 location is the National Park Service's preferred alternative. This is also the environmentally preferred alternative.

As part of the National Park Service's procedures to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, the Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect for this project is being made available for public review at the Fire Island Lighthouse, at park headquarters in Patchogue, and at the Babylon Public Library, West Islip Library, Bay Shore- Brightwaters Public Library, Sayville Library, Patchogue- Medford Library, South Country Library in Bellport, and the Mastics- Moriches- Shirley Community Library.

(more)

The document is also available on Fire Island National Seashore's website at:
www.nps.gov/fiis/parkmgmt/upload/EA_FresnelLensBuilding_3- 2007.pdf *(866 KB file)*

Historic images of this Fresnel lens are used in the exhibits at the Fire Island Lighthouse. The Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society also sells an educational DVD to help you learn more about lighthouse illumination. A link to the park's movie on the Fire Island Lighthouse if available at:

www.nps.gov/fiis/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm.

The Fresnel lens—a 16- foot tall, beehive- shaped series of glass prisms designed to bend light into a narrow beam that can be seen by ocean- going vessels for miles—was constructed in France around 1857 and installed in 1858 under the direction of the Lighthouse Board in the newly built Fire Island Light Station tower.

The new 168- foot tall lighthouse was constructed near the site of the original 1826 Fire Island Lighthouse, which was only 78 feet tall and lighted by a series of 15- inch reflectors and oil lamps. The construction and installation were part of a national movement to improve the illumination of beacons throughout the United States. The Lighthouse Board had responded to numerous requests from shipping companies for improved beacons along the major shipping lanes into New York City Harbor. 1st Order Fresnel Lenses were part of a larger plan for higher towers with improved lights. This light, powered by a variety of oils during its tenure, was active until 1933.

In 1933, the Fresnel lens was removed from the Fire Island Lighthouse in anticipation of the Station becoming electrified from a mainland power source. The lens was disassembled, crated up, and moved to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The lens was incorporated into the Franklin's permanent exhibit on Lighting and Optics. In 2000, the Franklin Institute removed the Fresnel lens from permanent exhibit and placed it into storage.

According to Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society President Tom Roberts, "We are very pleased that after several years of envisioning a permanent home for the Fire Island Light Station's original lens, planning for this project to construct a building has finally begun." In December 2006, the National Park Service signed a 10- year partnership agreement with the Society to continue the successful operation of the lighthouse. The FILPS will be the fundraising partner in implementing this plan.

By April 30, 2007, comments on the project should be addressed to Superintendent Reynolds at Fire Island National Seashore Headquarters, 120 Laurel Street, Patchogue, NY 11772. You may also post comments electronically at http://parkplanning.nps.gov. Search through Plans/Documents Open for Comment for Fire Island National Seashore projects.

For more information about Fire Island National Seashore, visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/fiis.

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