



Vicksburg National Military Park Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment April 2008

*From the
Superintendent -*



Friends,

Since we last met in June 2007, the Vicksburg National Military Park team has been busy identifying the park's landscape at various time periods and developing alternatives for landscape changes and other modifications including mitigation for environmental impacts. This process is part of the ongoing development of a Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment.

Back in June, you told us what you valued as key landscape features, which helped to develop draft alternatives for landscape changes and mitigation for their associated environmental impacts. We hope you will continue to be involved in this important planning process.

Accordingly, we now invite you to learn about these draft alternatives and provide your comments. We want your opinion on the objectives for this undertaking and how well each alternative achieves those 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 alternatives before evaluating each of them. When we present the revised alternatives to you again in several months, we will identify a preferred alternative.

We sincerely thank you for your feedback and request your continued involvement 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

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: April 17, 2008
Time: 3:00 – 7:00 pm
Place: Vicksburg National Military Park
Address: 3201 Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183
(disabled accessible)

Comments may also be submitted by May 2 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.

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



ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

1. Additional measures are needed to enhance interpretation of the battle and siege of Vicksburg.
2. Visitors appreciate the natural landscape; however visual interpretation and understanding of the military objectives are difficult because existing vegetation obscures lines of sight to battlefield features.
3. Visitors generally do not experience park resources up close.
4. Landscape changes will affect wildlife habitat, park aesthetics, soil erosion, wetlands, surface water quality and temperature, streamflow characteristics, maintenance requirements, visitor experience, prehistoric and historic archaeological resources, the only public

forested area within urban Vicksburg, and viewscapes.

5. Physical features and resources of the park are vandalized.
6. Soil erosion threatens military earthworks, archaeological resources, and monument and landscape stability.
7. Some visitor uses are not consistent with the park mission, others are consistent only where made secondary to the primary park mission of interpreting the battle and siege of Vicksburg.
8. Some resources and features are not accessible to visitors or maintenance crews.



OBJECTIVES

1. To facilitate understanding and interpretation of the park story including:
 - Campaign: topography, features, military use of the landscape, spatial patterns of features
 - Context
 - Park establishment and commemoration
 - Other historic periods
2. To provide opportunities for experiencing history up close by:
 - Encouraging visitors to leave their cars to experience the park firsthand
 - Providing interpretive experiences faithful to the park's purpose
 - Making the park's story relevant to visitors' lives today
 - Enhancing outreach and educational opportunities
3. To protect and preserve physical features and resources from degradation including vandalism, wear and tear, relic hunting, and erosion.
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.

5. To develop sustainable ways of maintaining the landscape.
6. To protect natural features as much as possible.
7. To protect threatened and endangered species.

ALTERNATIVES

During a November 2007 workshop, a full range of draft reasonable alternatives for landscape rehabilitation was developed. Four alternatives were determined to meet the park's purpose and objectives for taking action and are presented here for review. Two additional alternatives were thoroughly investigated but were determined to be not feasible and are no longer under consideration.

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.

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 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/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. 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; and reforesting approximately 20 - 25 acres of currently cleared areas.

Alternative D - Rehabilitate/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 large, continuous areas currently under woodland cover not present at the time of

the siege. Approximately 350 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, and plants to detect changes and determine if modifications are needed for subsequent phases of clearing; and reforestation approximately 20 - 25 acres of currently cleared areas.

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 the acquisition of additional parcels of land which have been heavily affected by adjacent development. Exceptions would also have to be made for the inclusion of features that do not date to the specified restoration period, such as commemorative monuments and the Visitor Center, which would negate the guiding concept of the alternative.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

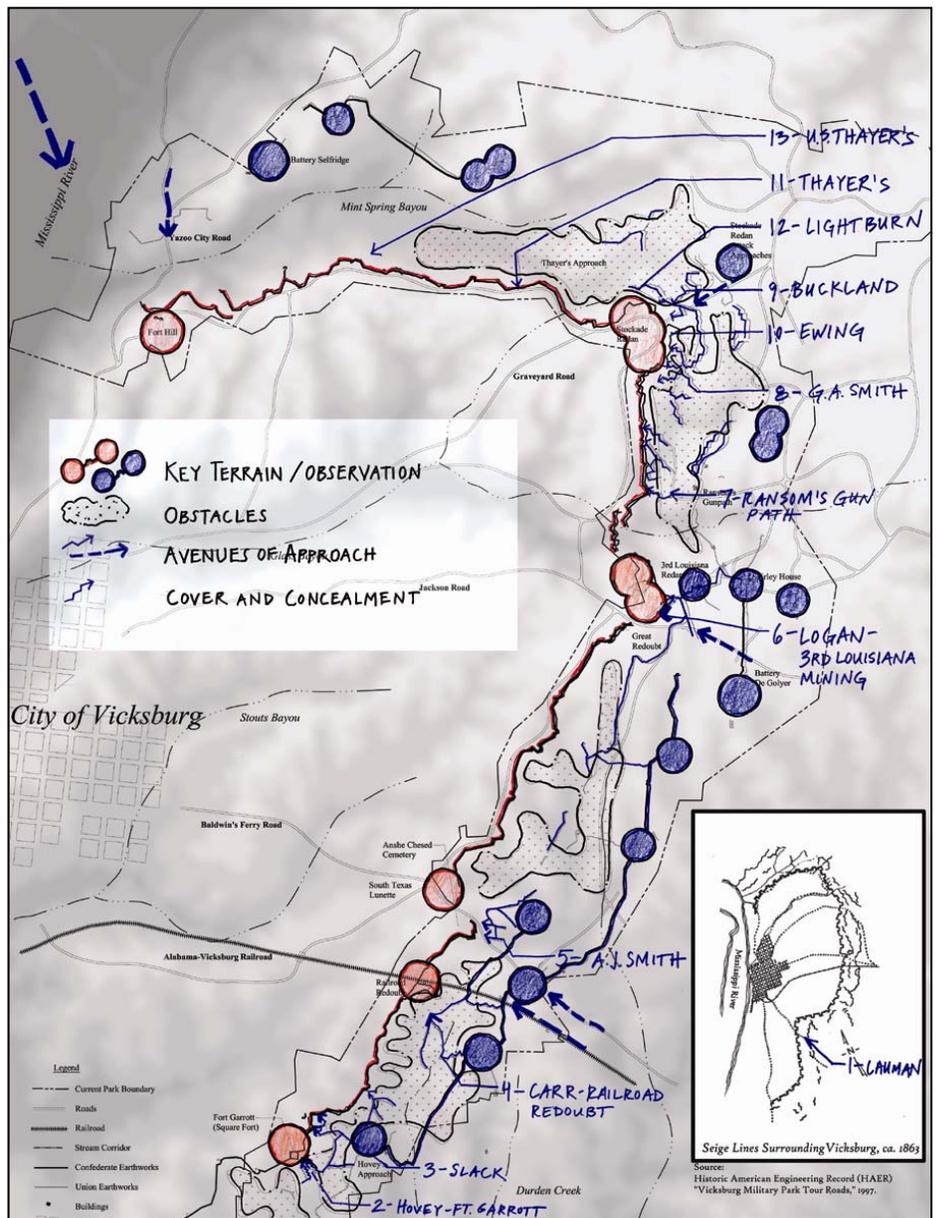
To develop landscape treatment alternatives, the project team identified significant military features using military engineering analysis (observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain, and avenues of approach), spatial organization, land use practices and patterns, vegetation, structures, and significant natural resources. This analysis, generally known by the military acronym OCOKA, identifies these historic features and documents their role in battle tactics and outcome. The integrity of historic military terrain features was compared against current park conditions to assess the degree that treatment and interpretation can elucidate the connections between terrain and military maneuvers of both armies, and their engagement at Vicksburg NMP, as well as the extent to which potential



treatments may affect natural and cultural resources.

This type of information was especially useful in the development of Alternatives C and D.

The Cultural Landscape Treatment Alternatives Matrix on the enclosed sheet is a side-by-side comparison of each of the four draft alternatives and highlights resource protection, NPS operations, and mitigation associated with each alternative. Figures showing the draft treatment alternatives are also shown on the attached sheet.



**Vicksburg National Military Park
Cultural Landscape Report/Environmental Assessment Comments
3201 Clay Street, Vicksburg, MS 39183-3495**

Draft Purpose and Objectives Statements and Draft Alternatives

The deadline for submitting comments is May 2, 2008. Please submit your comments to the above address.

Please provide us with feedback on the draft Purpose and Objectives Need statement and the proposed draft alternatives. If you need more space, please attach additional pages to this form. You may also comment via the NPS public comment website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/vick/>.

1. What changes should be made to the draft Purpose, Objectives, and Issues statements? What other objectives or issues should be addressed?

2. What are the positives and negatives of each alternative? What would you change in each alternative to better meet the objectives? Have any objectives not been met?
 - 2.a Alternative A – Continue Existing Management (No Action)

 - 2.b Alternative B – Preservation through Best Management Practices

 - 2.c Alternative C – Rehabilitate/Maintain Areas of Key Military Engagements

 - 2.d Alternative D – Rehabilitate/Maintain the Broad Spectrum of Military Engagements

3. What are your comments on the mitigation elements of the draft alternatives? Are there other mitigation aspects that should be addressed?

4. What additional information, concerns, or other comments about the draft alternatives do you have?

Name: _____
Organization: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____

Date: _____

Before including your personal identifying information, please be aware that we will make comments, including personal identifying information, available for public review. Individual respondents may request their names and/or home addresses, etc., be withheld by stating this request prominently at the beginning of your comments. We make submissions from organizations or businesses, and from their representatives or officials, available for public inspection in their entirety.