

HPAG Status Update to the FMFADA

June 25, 2009

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, Chairman, HPAG

National Park Service Working Group

Members: Rob Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation and HPAG member; Catherine Gilliam, National Parks Conservation Association and FMFADA Board Member; John Munick, real estate developer and HPAG member; and Bob Harper, business executive and FMFADA Board Member.

The working group has held several conference call meetings since March, developed a work plan, including an interview list, to collect background information on the range of NPS-related entities (units, affiliated areas, heritage areas, etc.) and is well along in implementing the work plan and conducting interviews. The group's charge is to provide factual information on the range of partnerships and associated considerations or differences in such areas as ownership, interpretation, funding, etc. Timeframes and the path to establishing the various options will be included.

To complement the extensive background research that has been conducted, interviews with a wide range of individuals with first-hand experience with different partnership examples have been or will be conducted. These interviews are intended to gather the perspectives of both NPS staff and of partner groups. Several conference calls have also been conducted with individuals with a broader administrative perspective.

The working group has gained valuable insights from interviews with people with experience at Presidio, Boston Harbor Islands, Jamestown, and Independence National Historic Site. In addition, interviews to gather information on National Heritage Areas have been helpful.

The data gathering has shown that it is difficult to compare one model with another, or even perhaps to use the term "model." Parks have a wide variety and seemingly unique arrangements of ownership, management, interpretation, funding, and partnerships.

The working group expects to have a draft report to the HPAG in the coming weeks for review and comment, followed by presentation to the FMFADA when the draft is finalized.

Natural Resources Working Group

Co-Chairmen: Dr. James Beard, Museum of Natural History; and John Davy, Director of Planning and Recreational Resources, Department of Conservation and Recreation. The participating agencies include DGIF, DHR, and VMRC,

along with FMFADA and Army assistance and with staffing assistance from Dutton and Associates.

Since being constituted in March, the Natural Resources Working Group (NRWG) has met twice (April 24 and May 19) to begin assessment of the natural and outdoor resources at Fort Monroe and development of concepts for their use as public education, recreation and tourism assets. The group has also been drawing together relevant information from existing sources (for example, the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan and the Virginia Outdoors Plan) that will inform recommendations and provide a context for understanding the opportunities at Fort Monroe. A final report is expected in August 2009.

In addition to the planning and guidance documents noted above, the group is assembling studies that detail the natural resources located at Fort Monroe specifically. These include fish and wildlife studies before and after Hurricane Isabel, data on trees, a vegetation survey, and biodiversity studies. Reports on previous archaeological work have also been shared. The environmental history of the property will be an important resource for interpretation.

The working group has noted that Fort Monroe represents a tremendous opportunity for appreciation and enjoyment of a range of natural resources. The relatively well-preserved dunes and the diverse assemblage of birds, for example, are likely to attract eco-tourists and birders, and to serve as the basis for public educational and interpretative programs. There are also similarly varied opportunities for active and passive recreation, including kayaking, rowing, swimming, hiking and birding, for example.

At its May 19 meeting, the group had the chance to interact with two Chesapeake Bay Foundation staff members and Virginia Director Ann Jennings. CBF was impressed with the resources and expressed its interest in exploring restoration projects. As a follow up, specific project concepts were provided in a recent letter to Bill Armbruster and Kathleen Kilpatrick. The working group and FMFADA staff will have the opportunity to review and discuss these projects in the weeks ahead.

The working group will meet again on July 14. Additional studies and data provided since the last meeting will fill out the understanding of the range of natural and outdoor resources at Fort Monroe. The working group will consider a draft recreation concept plan compiled by John Davy from members' input.

African American Culture Working Group

Chairman: Dr. Laurant Lee, Chief Curator of African American History, Virginia Historical Society. Members: Vernon Courtney, Executive Director of the Hampton University Museum; Christy Coleman, President of the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar; Harvey Bakari, Manager of the African

American History Interpretation Department at Colonial Williamsburg; and Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Associate Professor of History at Norfolk State University.

The members of the newly formed African American Culture Working Group (AACWG) were introduced at the June 1 meeting of the HPAG, and the group held its first meeting that afternoon. The HPAG recognizes that the African American history at Fort Monroe is rich and especially varied, stretching back to 1619 and forward to the present. The Contraband history is particularly important – both uniquely African American and American in its scope and significance.

The charge to the working group is to build on existing research and provide a report within 6 months. The report will offer a broad framework to understand and interpret the African American history at Fort Monroe and engage diverse audiences. The report is intended to help inform the Master Interpretive Planning process.

The report is further expected to articulate the significance of the African American history at Fort Monroe; to identify broad themes important and relevant to sharing that history; to recommend options and priorities for interpretation and programming; to suggest creative ways to interpret and disseminate the history, and to suggest potential partner organizations and/or collaborations. The working group will also recommend areas for further research and development.

The June 1 meeting focused on an orientation overview provided by FMFADA Deputy Director, Conover Hunt, an overview of Dr. Edwards-Ingram's recent research on Contraband families, an overview of Mrs. Joan Charles' research on the black labor force at Fort Monroe, as well as a tour of the property conducted by FMFADA board member, John Quarstein. David Dutton and Josh Gillespie assisted with staffing.

The working Group will meet again on August 3, and will be using emails and teleconferencing capabilities between face to face meetings.

Master Interpretive Planning Process

The HPAG supports this undertaking as foundational, and continues to strongly recommend moving forward as soon as possible to secure an expert planner to spearhead the effort. Our expectation is that the IMP will be thoroughgoing and open as to any specific programmatic outcome going into the process, will include a strong public input component, and will involve critical analysis and integration of programmatic concepts with relevant data and considerations. These should include, for example, tourism studies, economic data and assumptions, facilities and property management realities, business planning,

stewardship issues, etc. A successful Master Interpretive Planning process should set a course for the development of public and interpretive programs at Fort Monroe based on concepts and programmatic goals that are valued, achievable and sustainable. The HPAG has asked to be involved in the contract selection process.

Design Standards

The work to create this stewardship and operational document, the development and broad framework of which is a commitment of the Programmatic Agreement, has been ongoing for more than a year. The HPAG has provided general direction and review to help guide the work of consultant Greg Rutledge. Eleanor Krause, architect and member of the HPAG, has chaired our Design Standards subcommittee. Eleanor and Bill Brookover, Historic Architect with the National Park Service, have worked tirelessly and very closely on the detail level with Greg and Josh Gillespie. The Standards are in draft form at this time with ongoing work ahead including, for example, integration of the results of the Army's landscape and viewshed studies that are now underway. The HPAG is pleased to endorse the progress to date, the direction and the content and to have Eleanor join Greg in reporting to you in detail.