

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT for the
MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

This Final Environmental Impact Statement describes and analyzes two scenarios proposed by the National Park Service to manage Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, Vermont. The responsible official is the National Park Service Director of the Northeast Region. For further information, please contact the Superintendent, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, P.O. Box 178, Woodstock, Vermont, 05091, (802) 457-3368.

Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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FOREWORD

This Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park Final General Management Plan is presented in an abbreviated format. It must be integrated with the Marsh-Billings National Historical Park Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement issued in April 1998, to be considered a complete document reflecting two management scenarios and all significant environmental impacts. The two documents together compose the complete Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The abbreviated format has been used for the Final Environmental Impact Statement because the changes to the draft document are minor and confined primarily to factual corrections, which do not modify the analysis. Use of this format is in compliance with the 1978 implementing regulations (40 CFR 1503.4[c]) for the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

This abbreviated Final Environmental Impact Statement is composed of five parts: the cover sheet, foreword, summary, errata, and comments and responses. The cover sheet lists the responsible agencies and contact persons, and designates the status of the statement (final, draft, etc.). The foreword describes the elements of the abbreviated Final Environmental Impact Statement. The summary provides an overview of the park and its resources, and briefly describes the proposal and alternative that were presented in the draft plan. The errata section identifies and corrects any errors and shows any necessary revisions to the Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The comments and responses address or otherwise respond to all substantive comments received during the public review period.

SUMMARY

Stewardship

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is the only national park to focus on conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in America. Opened in June of 1998, Vermont's first national park preserves and interprets the historic Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller property in Woodstock. The park is named for George Perkins Marsh one of the nation's first global environmental thinkers (who grew up on the property) and for Frederick Billings, an early conservationist who established a progressive dairy farm and professionally managed forest on the former Marsh farm. Frederick Billings's granddaughter, Mary French Rockefeller, and her husband, conservationist Laurance S. Rockefeller came to own property in the 1950s. Since that time they sustained Billings's mindful land management practices over the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1983, they established the Billings Farm & Museum to continue the farm's working dairy and to interpret rural Vermont life and agricultural history. The Billings Farm & Museum is operated by the Woodstock Foundation, Inc. as a private nonprofit educational institution.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park was created in 1992 when the Rockefellers gave the estate's residential and forest lands to the people of the United States. Today, the park interprets the history of conservation with tours of the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller mansion and the surrounding 550-acre forest—one of the oldest planned and continuously managed woodlands in America. Working in partnership, the park and the museum present historic and contemporary examples of conservation stewardship and interpret the lives and contributions of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Billings and his descendants, and Mary and Laurance S. Rockefeller.

Park Overview

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is located in Woodstock, among the rolling hills and pastures of eastern Vermont. Incorporated in 1772, Woodstock was renowned in the late 1800s and early 1900s as one of New England's most beautiful villages. It has been a resort town for over a century.

The boundary of the national park includes Mount Tom forest land and pastures as well as the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion and surrounding residential buildings and grounds. Within the park's boundary, in a "protection zone," is Billings Farm & Museum, which is privately owned and operated by the Woodstock Foundation, Inc.

Forest

The national historical park includes 550 acres of forest on the slopes of Mount Tom. Beginning in the 1870s, Frederick Billings developed what he considered to be his crowning achievement in Woodstock—the forest, with its tree plantations and networks of trails and carriage roads. Encompassing some 50 different forest stands, the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller forest includes plantations of single and mixed species as well as former farm fields now in various stages of forest succession. Of those tree plantations set out by Billings in the 1800s, 11 survive today. One of the oldest continuously managed woodlands in North America, this forest still produces saw logs and firewood. At the same time, it is managed with a strong emphasis on aesthetics, education, and recreation.

Ever since Billings constructed his network of footpaths and carriage roads to showcase the managed forest and picturesque views of the countryside, the community has been welcome in the Mount Tom woodland. Today the trails and carriage roads are also a major component of a wider network of cross-country skiing trails, operated under an easement by the Woodstock Ski Touring Center. To preserve the tranquil character of the forest and opportunities for these recreational uses, the deed of gift by which the National Park Service accepted the property prohibits the use of mountain bicycles, snowmobiles or other motorized

vehicles (except those needed to manage the property and trails); camping and camp fires; hunting; fishing; and swimming in the pond called the Pogue.

Residential Complex

The mansion, a large three-story brick residence sited on a promontory at the head of Elm and River streets, is the centerpiece of the residential complex. The mansion was originally built for George Perkins Marsh's parents and their growing family, in 1805-07. After Billings purchased it in 1869, the mansion was thoroughly renovated twice. It was remodeled a final time after it became the residence of Mary F. and Laurance S. Rockefeller in 1954. Collections belonging to the Billings and Rockefeller families include more than 500 paintings and prints—works by such artists as Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, John Frederick Kensett, and Asher B. Durand. Together these works shed light on changing environmental perceptions and suggest the influence of art and artists on the conservation movement in the mid- to late-19th century. The residential complex also includes a two-and-a-half-story belvedere reminiscent of a Swiss cottage and a three-story Queen Anne-style carriage barn.

Billings Farm & Museum

The Billings Farm & Museum includes 88 acres of pastures, hay meadows, cropland, and small portions of lowland woods, along with a herd of registered Jersey cows, Southdown sheep, draft horses, oxen, chickens, and other farm animals. An active dairy, which grows its own feed and sells milk, is a major component of the outdoor museum that is operated on the farm.

A living museum of Vermont's rural heritage, Billings Farm & Museum interprets significant themes of the national historical park. There, permanent exhibits portray the values of 1890s farm families of east-central Vermont and explore the relevance of those values to today's culture. The restored 1890 Farm House expands on the museum's interpretation of rural farm culture, addressing the historical role of the Billings Farm. The operating dairy farm, where championship Jersey cows have been raised since 1871, conducts and interprets responsible agricultural land stewardship. Museum programs interpret the progressive agricultural interests of Frederick Billings as well as the relationships between rural farm culture and the stewardship of working landscapes in an agricultural countryside.

The Significance of the Park

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park has an important place in the history of conservation stewardship. Its significance lies in both people and practices—several prominent American conservationists and more than a century of continuous, careful stewardship, evident in the park's landscape, buildings, and museum collections.

Before the park was established, the mansion and its environs were determined to be of such national significance that they were listed as a National Historic Landmark. In addition, as part of the Woodstock Village Historic District, the residential complex and much of the farmland were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Management Scenarios

The Proposal: National Park Partnership

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park will be managed in partnership by the National Park Service and the Woodstock Foundation, which operates Billings Farm & Museum. By building upon the audience, program, infrastructure, and facilities of the existing Farm & Museum, the Proposal can achieve several economies of scale. The expertise, experience, and capabilities of both the National Park Service and the Woodstock Foundation will be linked as the staffs of the two organizations work in cooperation to

manage and interpret this working cultural landscape. Such a relationship will also reflect George Perkins Marsh's view that government should operate in the interests of the common good, just as private landowners should manage their property as good stewards.

Billings Farm & Museum's established audience will, most likely, be a major component of the national historical park's anticipated audience. People who currently enjoy visiting Billings Farm & Museum will probably be inclined to visit the park as well, although some visitors might be more interested in a particular area—the forest, perhaps, or the residential complex, or the farm.

Conservation and stewardship of the land were vitally important to the Billings and the Rockefeller families, following in the wake of George Perkins Marsh—who is considered to be the nation's first ecological thinker. Accordingly, the National Park Service will develop interpretive materials, exhibits, and programs to enhance visitors' understanding of the forest, the farm, and the successive owners' contributions. On scheduled guided tours of the residential complex as well, park managers can explore with visitors these essential values and visions.

Billings Farm & Museum will continue to be privately owned and operated in partnership with the park. The museum experience will become a major component of the interpretive program for the whole park. The museum's continuing emphasis on agriculture and the era of Frederick Billings will fully embrace important aspects of the park's central theme of conservation stewardship. Historical and contemporary examples of agricultural land stewardship will enhance current programming and interpretation.

To many people in Vermont and across the country, it is clear that Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, with its theme of responsible stewardship, is being established at a particularly auspicious time and place. The Woodstock Foundation and the National Park Service will work in partnership to develop a *Stewardship Initiative* that will encourage effective, innovative thinking and practice in conservation stewardship. Although national in scope, this initiative will also focus on the needs of Vermont and the role of stewardship in shaping the future of Vermont's communities and landscapes. Another component of the *Stewardship Initiative* is a *Conservation Study Institute*. The institute, affiliated with the University of Vermont, provides a forum for the study of conservation history, the practice of conservation today, and future directions in the field.

On arrival, visitors will park their cars at Billings Farm & Museum. They will be greeted at the Billings Farm & Museum entry building, which will be modestly expanded by the Woodstock Foundation to serve as a joint orientation center for Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and Billings Farm & Museum. This center will feature an introductory film and a display that will orient visitors to the park and its programs. Also available at this center will be basic services—restrooms, a museum shop, ticket sales—and information about activities. Fees will be charged for admission to Billings Farm & Museum as well as for scheduled tours of the residential complex.

Walking from Billings Farm & Museum to the mansion and forest areas, visitors will cross Vermont Route 12 at a controlled crosswalk to be established with the Village. Whenever a large number of visitors are expected, a uniformed crossing guard—ideally employed by the Woodstock Village Police and funded by the national historical park—will supervise this crosswalk.

For guided tours of the mansion and gardens, people will assemble at the carriage barn. Once rehabilitated, this building will display in-depth exhibits on George Perkins Marsh, the evolution of conservation stewardship and a rotating exhibit about place-based conservation efforts around the country. The building will also house park administrative offices and curatorial storage for museum collections.

This Proposal will achieve programmatic benefits and economies of scale through an operational partnership between the National Park Service and the Woodstock Foundation (Billings Farm & Museum). Federally funded staffing and capital construction needs will be reduced through staff collaboration and sharing of facilities between the partner organizations. The park's historic setting and environment will also

be preserved from unnecessary encroachments, as new construction will be kept to a minimum. Most maintenance activities will be contracted with local trades and service providers, thereby reducing the need for National Park Service maintenance infrastructure. The Woodstock Foundation endowment will provide funds for preservation maintenance and conservation activities.

To implement this Proposal it will require a federal annual operating base budget of about \$1.2 million. Carriage barn renovations will require \$2.4 million. Without the active partnership of the Woodstock Foundation, however, the cost of developing and operating the park would be considerably higher for the National Park Service. Under the Proposal, the Woodstock Foundation's participation in operating resources and construction capital (for the expanded orientation center) will be comparable to federal expenditures. These expenditures will be over and above the endowment fund for the preservation maintenance of the park.

The Alternative: Independent Coordinated Park Management

The Proposal and the Alternative differ in their approaches to management. To manage the park, the Proposal calls for a strong partnership between the Woodstock Foundation and the National Park Service. The Alternative assumes that these two organizations would work independently—not in collaboration.

Under the Alternative, visitors would experience the park as two distinct units: Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and Billings Farm & Museum. There would be some duplication of basic functions and facilities; preservation maintenance, conservation practices, and other management activities would be carried out independently. The National Park Service would rehabilitate the carriage barn as an orientation center separate from the visitor center at Billings Farm & Museum. In the residential complex and the forest, the National Park Service would conduct its own interpretive programs. Visitors would still park at Billings Farm & Museum and walk to the carriage barn via a supervised crosswalk. Although Billings Farm & Museum programs might not be integrated with National Park Service interpretations, visitors to areas administered by the National Park Service would be encouraged to visit Billings Farm & Museum. In turn, museum visitors would be directed to the National Park Service carriage barn.

Near the woodshed the National Park Service would construct a new maintenance facility and parking spaces for maintenance vehicles. Operating independently, the National Park Service would conduct its own maintenance activities rather than contracting for them.

It would require a federal annual operating base budget of about \$1.4 million to implement the Alternative. An additional \$4 million in line-item construction funds would be needed to renovate the carriage barn and construct the new maintenance facility. Under the Alternative, the Woodstock Foundation would manage a preservation maintenance endowment for the park, just as it would under the Proposal. However, the federal expenditures would be significantly greater than the federal costs of the Proposal for two main reasons: (1) the limited private participation by the Woodstock Foundation and (2) the costs of maintenance activities.

ERRATA

Following the public review of the Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement, some errors were discovered. This section identifies those errors, notes where they occur in the document, and presents any necessary corrections.

Throughout document: Replace, “Marsh-Billings National Historical Park” with, “Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park,” and “Marsh-Billings,” with, “Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller,” due to the legislated change in the name of the park.

Page ii, Column 1, Paragraph 1, Sentence 3: Add “some” before “50”.

Page ii, Column 1, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1: Delete “20-mile” before “network”.

Page 2, Column 2, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2: Add “national forests,” before “science and natural history centers”.

Page 2, Column 2, Paragraph 3, Sentence 4: Delete “public” before “property”.

Page 2, Column 2, Paragraph 3, Last Sentence: Add “, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places,” after, “The 154-acre property”.

Page 4, Column 2, Paragraph 2, Sentence 3: Add a hyphen between “1805” and “1807”.

Page 32, Column 2, Paragraph 3, Sentence 3: Replace “ownership” with “tenures”.

Page 42, Column 2, Paragraph 1, Sentence 2: Delete “, and adder’s tongue”.

Page 42, Column 2, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2: Replace “buying” with “acquiring”.

Page 52, Column 1, Paragraph 4, Sentence 3: Replace “10” with “20”.

Page 53, Column 2, Paragraph 1, Sentence 2: Replace “maintains” with “maintained (but has discontinued)”.

Page 53, Column 2, Paragraph 1, Sentence 3: Delete “also” before “been” and replace “dieback” with “canker”.

Page 53, Column 2, Paragraph 1, Sentence 5: Add “with the exception of the butternut canker,” after “characterized as serious”.

Page 53, Column 2, Paragraph 2, Sentence 2: Replace “Gulf Stream” with “Barnard Brook”.

Page 90, as second to last entry: Add, “1996, Woodstock Town and Village, Master Plan”.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES ON THE DRAFT PLAN / STATEMENT

Introduction

The National Park Service consulted with the general public and various organizations and agencies in developing the draft and final plans for the park. The National Park Service prepared two newsletters for the general public, and conducted small group meetings with park neighbors, local merchants, schoolchildren, and senior citizens. In collaboration with the Town and Village Planner, the University of Vermont, the Vermont Folklife Center, and the community liaisons, the planning team administered a "community survey" to solicit the thoughts and opinions of Woodstock residents. A more in-depth community survey was conducted by the Vermont Folklife Center and involved interviews with longtime residents of Woodstock. Issue-oriented focus groups were held with historic preservation professionals, natural resource managers, foresters, and land conservation groups, among others. The National Park Service consulted with state and local government officials, the regional planning commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, the Vermont Land Trust, and the Vermont Institute of Natural Science during the course of the planning process. Also, the planning team worked with the staff of *The Vermont Standard* to publish 4,000 copies of a planning summary that was distributed as a special supplement to that newspaper.

In January 1993, National Park Service staff corresponded with various local officials and boards to announce the planning process. In July 1993, the National Park Service contacted the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, the Vermont Natural Resources Council, the Office of Senator Jeffords, the Office of Senator Leahy, and the Office of Representative Sanders to provide background information on the park and the planning process. In August 1993, the National Park Service contacted the Director, Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) to begin the consultation process required by the programmatic agreement (revised in October 1995) among the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the ACHP, and the National Park Service. In addition, representatives of the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation participated in the Conservation Stewardship Workshop and hosted one of the focus groups described below. A description of specific public involvement activities follows.

Community Liaisons

Town selectmen and Village trustees designated two community people to represent the community on park planning issues. The community liaisons have provided insight into community issues, acted as liaison between the National Park Service and Town and Village officials, helped schedule local meetings, and identified local people for oral history interviews. In addition, they occasionally published articles in the local newspaper to keep the public informed about the park and the progress of planning.

Community Survey

In July 1994, a community survey was administered in collaboration with the Town and Village Planner, the University of Vermont, the Vermont Folklife Center, and the community liaisons. The survey included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

Focus Group Meetings

At all of the following meetings, National Park Service staff described the park and the planning process, and then invited attendees to ask questions and/or comment.

North Street Neighbors (March 25, 1994): This meeting was hosted by local residents and was attended by about 10 residents.

Land Conservation Community (April 27, 1994): The Vermont Land Trust hosted this meeting at the King Farm in Woodstock; about nine conservation professionals attended.

Regional Planning Community (April 27, 1994): This meeting was hosted by Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission at the King Farm in Woodstock with about five people from the greater Woodstock area in attendance.

Historic Preservation Community (May 18, 1994): This meeting was held at Billings Farm & Museum and was attended by about 19 historic preservation professionals from across the state.

Local Merchants (May 18, 1994): This meeting was hosted by the Woodstock Historical Society and was attended by 20 representatives of the local business community.

Woodstock Elementary School Children (May 19, 1994): The National Park Service met with a group of about 15 students at the Woodstock Elementary School.

Mountain Avenue Neighbors (May 23, 1994): This meeting was held at a local residence and was attended by about 15 residents.

Edwin J. Thompson Senior Center (June 2, 1994): This meeting was held at the Edwin J. Thompson Senior Center. National Park Service staff met with about 10 senior citizens for a lunchtime informational presentation.

In-depth Interviews

In the summer of 1994, the Vermont Folklife Center conducted 29 in-depth interviews involving a total of 46 people, most of them natives or longtime residents of Woodstock.

Newsletters

Newsletter No. 1 (Winter, 1993) was mailed to about 1,500 households and several hundred copies were delivered to Woodstock for informal distribution at town offices. The newsletter described basic information about the establishment of the park and introduced the public to the planning process.

Newsletter No.2 (Spring, 1994) contained the "community survey," and was therefore broadly distributed. It was mailed to approximately 4,000 individuals and several hundred copies were delivered to Woodstock for informal distribution at town offices. The newsletter also reported on the progress of data collection for the plan.

A planning summary was published as a supplement to *The Vermont Standard* in April, 1998. About 4,000 copies were distributed.

Public Review of Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement

About 380 copies of the Draft General Management Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement were distributed to agencies, organizations, and individuals on May 8, 1998. The National Park Service conducted two public forums in May 1998 to solicit comments regarding the draft plan. Representatives from the National Park Service, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, and the Boston Support Office met with interested parties at Billings Farm & Museum's entry building from 5:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. on Thursday, May 21 and from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. on Friday, May 22. The public was informed of the meeting locations and times through notices published in local media outlets.

Public comments were received by a variety of methods. At the open house sessions, the public was invited to discuss the various alternatives with NPS staff and submit written comments on comment forms. These comment forms could also be filled out and mailed back to the park at a later time. Individuals could also write their ideas and comments on a separate flip chart set up as a comment board. Attendance at both

public forums was light. Six persons attended the Thursday session and seven people attended the Friday session.

A 60-day review period (May 8 to July 7, 1998) was designated for receiving comments from agencies, organizations, and the general public. A total of eight letters were received during the review period. At the end of the review period, all comments were reviewed and the substantive comments were identified. Substantive comments are those which (1) question the accuracy of the information/data presented, (2) question the adequacy of the environmental analysis, (3) present a reasonable alternative other than those presented in the draft document, or (4) cause changes or revisions in the proposal. Responses to the substantive comments were prepared, and those responses are presented in the following text. The letters are reproduced with the substantive comments underlined. The corresponding responses are presented on the pages following each letter.

Responses to Letters

The following are the letters received commenting on the draft plan and NPS responses to the substantive comments.

letter from michael brands

Michael Brands, Town/Village Planner

The pathway proposed is consistent with the general management plan, and is scheduled to be built in the year 2000. Park managers look forward to continuing to work with the Town, Village, and others to link the park physically and programmatically with other places and entities.

Letter from preston

Preston Bristow, Vermont Land Trust

The idea of including conservation easements, their monitoring, and their importance as a conservation tool in the park's message is a sound one. Park managers will work in collaboration with the Vermont Land Trust and other organizations to include interpretation of conservation easements as a component of the park's programming and exhibitry.

The second concept regarding a conservation easement on Billings Farm & Museum property has been shared with the property owner for consideration.

The support of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is greatly appreciated.

Letter from charles foster

Charles H. W. Foster

The Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller forest will serve as an interpretive tool used to enhance public understanding of conservation history and sustainable forestry practices. Although the general management plan is complete and provides a framework within which the park can operate to this end, the scope of park programming continues to evolve; much work needs to be done before the park's potential can be understood, not to mention realized. Park managers continue to work in collaboration with other organizations to define the park's role, including making more precise definitions of "conservation stewardship" and "resource management" that are appropriate to interpretation at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller. Park managers are working to expand the scope of the *Conservation Study Institute* to include organizations outside of Vermont.

Letter from shpo

Elsa Gilbertson, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

In addition to the response below, several comments were addressed in the “Errata” section.

When writing the document, the planning team had little information about the role of Mary French Rockefeller and the other women involved in the management of the property. Since publishing the draft, more has been discovered about the roles of the women. This information will be included in interpretive programming and exhibitry.

National historic sites and national historical parks are administratively and automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places upon establishment without further review. The documentation for such areas requires State Historic Preservation Office review and comment, but, although the documentation is prepared on a National Register form, it is “documentation” for the already-listed area, and not a nomination. The NPS did neglect to list the park in the National Register upon the park’s establishment, however, this error has been corrected.

The *Stewardship Initiative* and *Conservation Study Institute* are intended to be major components of the park’s outreach efforts. While the draft plan identifies these programs and provides some explanation as to their nature, their exact scope is still evolving.

letter from epa

Elizabeth Higgins, United States Environmental Protection Agency

Evaluation noted.

letter from linell

Thomas A. Linell

The Mt. Peg and Blake Hill scenic easements were not indicated on the map of the park in the draft plan because the easements—while donated to the people of the United States at the same time that the park property was donated—are technically outside of the park boundary, are located on private property, and are not open to the general public as part of the park. Originally, the areas under scenic easement were indicated on park maps. This, however, caused confusion. Even though the maps indicated that these areas were part of the “scenic zone,” people thought that these areas were open to the public as part of the park. To minimize this confusion, we removed the areas under easement from the maps in the plan. The park’s interpretive program, however, will include a description of conservation easements, and their importance as a conservation tool.

The purpose of the easements is to conserve the scenic, open and natural character of key views from park property. The easements are implemented by limiting and restricting the development and uses (e.g. industrial uses) of the properties. The deed restrictions prohibiting mountain biking on park property do not affect the lands under easement because they are not within the park boundary.

The 1996 Woodstock Town and Village Master Plan was erroneously omitted from the “References Consulted” section of the draft plan. This has been addressed in the Errata.

The draft plan considers bus service only as a companion to an off-site visitor center. It is not the purview of the National Park Service to provide a municipal transit service without some compelling park-related reason.

Bicycle racks will be provided at the Billings Farm & Museum.

Park managers are working with the Town, Village, and other to develop physical links between the park and areas outside the park boundary. The first proposal being advanced is an improved connection between the park and the village center. Park managers are open to consideration of additional pedestrian linkages.

letter from lyme timber

Peter R. Stein, The Lyme Timber Company

Comments noted.

letter from chamber

Paul Wildasin, Woodstock Chamber of Commerce

When developing the management scenarios for the draft plan, the planning team did consider, but reject, a proposal for a National Park Service-operated off-site visitor center. The reasons for rejecting this proposal are outlined in the draft plan. The draft plan also states that park managers would actively support the efforts of others to develop a visitors center for the Woodstock area. To this end, park managers remain open to discussing potential collaboration should the proposal described be adopted and endorsed by the community, the Town, and the Village.

Responses to Comments Received at Public Forums

Comment: “Glad the park will be open to horseback and carriages.”

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: “What about improving the sidewalk (gravel path) between the park and the iron bridge?”

Response: Improving this pedestrian pathway is consistent with the general management plan, and park managers are working with the Town, Village, and others to implement this proposal.

Comment: “Still worried about downtown traffic.”

Response: The impact of park visitors on village traffic was studied as part of the planning process. The studies revealed that traffic resulting from park visitors would be minimal and not discernible to the average driver. Our first season of operation has not caused additional traffic problems in the village (or elsewhere) which supports the findings of the study.

Comment: “Horses do much more damage than mountain bikes. Allow both!”

Response: The property was transferred to the US government with deed restrictions in place that prohibit the use of mountain bicycles, recreational snowmobiles or other motorized vehicles (except for those necessary for park purposes), hunting, fishing, camping and camp fires, and swimming in the Pogue (the small mountain pond). Park managers will enforce the deed restrictions.

Comment: “Good/safe/pedestrian access is important.”

Response: Park managers agree and have developed a cross walk, augmented with a crossing guard stationed at peak times to manage the pedestrian crossing of Vermont Route 12. The crosswalk works extremely well and provides a low-cost, low-impact solution to the pedestrian crossing problem.

Comment: “Suspect you will have to revisit the underpass issue.”

Response: Please see response above.

Comment: “Picnic and snack, light lunch facilities may be necessary. Woodstock Village is not child or family dining friendly.”

Response: A dairy-related snack bar is part of the plan for Billings Farm & Museum’s operation. In terms of lunch facilities, it was decided that the park and museum would not provide such facilities to avoid competition with lunch providers in the village.

Comment: “Great! We like everything about the idea.”

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: “We like the integrated approach: also, more cost effective and less effect on the environment.”

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: “We object to snowmobiles on park tracks.”

Response: Snowmobiles are prohibited on park trails. The property was transferred to the US government with deed restrictions in place that prohibit the use of recreational snowmobiles. Park managers are legally bound to enforce the deed restrictions.

Comment: “Crossing is hazardous from farm to estate.”

Response: Park managers agree and have worked with the Village to establish a cross walk with a crossing guard stationed at peak times to manage the pedestrian crossing of Vermont Route 12. The crosswalk provides a safe crossing from farm to estate.