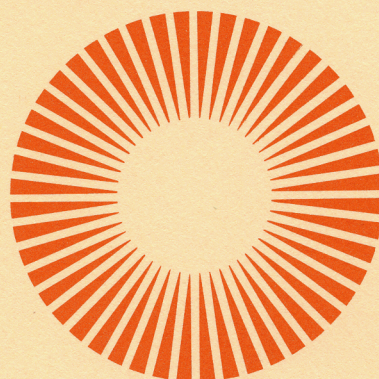


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REGIONAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



URBANIZATION & THE NATIONAL PARKS:
Petersburg National Battlefield &
the Surrounding Communities

May, 1986



URBANIZATION AND THE NATIONAL PARKS:
PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Summary of a May 20, 1985 workshop conducted by the
Regional Resources Development Institute and
the Clemson Cooperative Park Study Unit,
Clemson University.

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WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

At the request of Petersburg National Battlefield (PETE) and in consultation with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Science Office, a workshop to define management concerns of PETE was conducted at the Petersburg National Battlefield on May 20, 1985. Park management, local planners and leaders, and various experts and representatives of user groups with an interest in park management participated in the workshop. (These participants and the workshop facilitators are identified in the final section of this report.)

A nominal group process was used to conduct the workshop. After brief introductions, the workshop participants constructed individual lists of battlefield management problems and actions which could be taken to resolve these problems. Using a round robin process, each problem or specific action was identified and discussed by the total group. Approximately sixty items were generated in this process. Although sixty items were listed during the workshop, some items included more than one suggested action, thus more than sixty actions were identified.

The participants grouped the actions into three broad categories -- park responsibilities, community responsibilities, or joint responsibilities -- based on who the workshop participants felt should take the lead in resolving the problem or carrying out the action.

Finally, though all items on the collective list were considered significant, individual rankings were combined to identify the ten most important actions identified by the group. Individuals ranked (from one to ten) the ten items they felt were most important on the collective list. The group list of the ten most important items was based, first, on the number of individuals selecting an item and, second, on the sum of the rank scores those individuals assigned the items.

The ten most important actions are discussed briefly in the next section. Following that is a summary of all ideas generated by the group. This section is divided into the three major categories adopted by the group (park responsibilities, community responsibilities, and joint responsibilities). Subdivisions are used to further organize the material. Within each subsection is a general discussion of the management problem followed by the list of specific actions suggested by the workshop participants to alleviate these problems.

OVERVIEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIONS

Of all the actions identified, the following were judged by the group to be the most important for improving park management. The order is based on the individual rankings of all fourteen participants. Each of the following ten actions was individually ranked in the top ten by at least five of the workshop members.

- # 1. Consider the needs of PETE in assessing the long-range impacts of area development. Land-use zoning plans for the city of Petersburg and Prince George County should be consistent with the purpose of the park and should meet park protection needs.
- # 2. Manage conflicts among users and between non-historic uses and the context and purpose of the site.
- # 3. Protect the natural and physical resources of PETE from degradation.
- # 4. Promote wise decision-making and use patterns by increasing both management and user understanding and appreciation of the national significance of the park.
- # 5. Cultivate functional links between PETE and local and regional tourism boards.
- # 6. Conduct more educational programs on local history.
- # 7. Develop strategies to mitigate encroachment on PETE by residential, industrial, and commercial development in the community. This encroachment impacts both visitor use and relationships between park personnel and the community.
- # 8. Increase communication between the park and the city of Petersburg and local businesses to limit the visual impact of development along Washington Street and South Crater Road which detracts from the aesthetic experience on the approach to and exit from the park.
- # 9. Develop and implement strategies to manage problems of land use and acquisition (including consideration of problems associated with inholdings, easements, and surrounding zoning).
- # 10. Develop a recreational facility within the park to concentrate recreational uses in less historically-sensitive areas of the park. Recreational and historic interests must be balanced to reduce conflicts.

These ten actions include park, community, and joint responsibilities. Actions 2, 3, 9, and 10 are primarily park responsibilities. Actions 1, 7, and 8 were identified as community responsibilities while the remaining actions (4, 5, and 6) are joint responsibilities of both the park and the community. All the actions received support from park management, local leaders, and others (including representatives from Virginia State University, National Parks and Conservation Association, and Friends of Virginia Civil War Parks) except actions six and eight which were not ranked in the top ten by any of the three park personnel present at the workshop.

After these ten items were identified and discussed by the group, participants identified two other actions which were also very important though not represented in the top ten. First, funding is needed for land acquisition (specifically the Five Forks Battlefield) and facility development (a visitor center annex and wayside exhibit at Fort Greg), to maintain present personnel levels, and to strengthen interpretive outreach programming. Second, the impact of potential user fees on the local community should be considered.

MANAGEMENT NEEDS

All actions identified by the workshop participants are summarized below. In each section the general problem is presented followed by a list of specific actions suggested to alleviate the problem. It is not necessarily true that the entire group considered each action to be necessary. As such, care should be taken in interpreting the summary as presented.

I. PARK RESPONSIBILITIES.

The employees of PETE were identified as the primary group responsible for implementation of the following actions. These park actions were suggested to address concerns regarding acquisition and boundary problems, resource protection, maintenance, visitor management, education, and interpretive programming.

A. Acquisition and boundary adjustment.

Several land use and acquisition problems were identified by the workshop participants. These included problems with inholdings, easements, surrounding zoning, and adjacent land uses.

Specific actions:

- Identify specific land use problems and develop strategies for managing them.
- Adjust the boundaries at Petersburg National Battlefield to preserve the integrity of the park.
- Acquire the Five Forks Battlefield for the park. Five Forks was the final major battle significant in the fall of Petersburg. The battlefield is largely undeveloped and the

key tract is in single ownership. A grassroots movement is necessary for management to acquire it while the integrity of the area is still intact.

- Minimize the negative aesthetic impacts of the existing commercial strips by limiting their visual impacts through vegetation screening, etc. within the park.

B. Resource protection and maintenance.

The park is mandated to preserve both the natural and cultural values of the site. These resources provide the base on which visitor use occurs. Because of its emphasis on visitor needs, the recent Park Restoration Improvement Program (PRIP) has been viewed as having created a potential for slighting resource needs. However, the provision and improvement of infrastructures for visitor use must not override the protection needs of the natural and cultural resource base. Protecting these resources from degradation was viewed by the workshop participants as an important management concern.

Specific actions:

- Resolve conflicts between the natural and cultural qualities of the park. Conflicts between these two areas include the negative effects of trees, deer herds, and groundhogs on the earth works.
- Identify and monitor geologic aspects of the park, both surface and subsurface. Include monitoring of stream and surface dynamics in general and the erosion of earth works in particular.
- Evaluate maintenance activities with respect to their effectiveness and means by which the need for them can be reduced.
- Minimize unnecessary development within the park. The park should identify what local communities can supply and should not provide anything that can be supplied by the local communities.

C. Visitor management.

Various types of conflicts occur due to visitor use patterns at Petersburg National Battlefield. Some non-historic uses conflict with the context and purpose of the park. (A non-historic use is an activity that does not depend on the historic aspects of the park or is not related to the park's cultural purposes.) Furthermore, different user groups conflict with one another. There is a general need to accommodate and balance recreational uses with historic and cultural uses.

Specific actions:

- Identify strategies and techniques for anticipating, identifying, and mitigating adverse impacts and conflicts that may occur as high-tech recreation expands (e.g. the use of mountain bikes).
- Inform the visiting public of park procedures and reasons for denying or approving various recreational special events with respect to the park's enabling legislation and the impacts of these activities.
- Determine the carrying capacity of the park (after clearly identifying management objectives).
- Develop a recreational facility within park boundaries to direct recreational users from the more sensitive historical areas of the park. This recreational space should be developed in such a way that it can accommodate pageants, concerts, etc.
- Inform park visitors about alternative activities and attractions available in local communities.
- Assess the impacts on PETE of an increased tourism push by the City of Petersburg.
- Identify strategies for minimizing inappropriate activities. Such actions threaten the park and park visitors at Petersburg National Battlefield. These illegal activities include: (1) vandalism, (2) assaults or other serious crimes against visitors, (3) pets allowed to run unrestrained, (4) abandoned pets harassing wildlife, (5) relic hunting, (6) deer poaching, and (7) breaking and entering park buildings.

D. Perceptions of the park.

A clear understanding of the purpose(s) of the park as congressionally mandated in the park's organic act is necessary. Differing perceptions held by park management and the public regarding the nature and purpose of the park create management problems. The management of PETE must make an effort to understand and correct these different perceptions.

Specific actions:

- Determine to what extent the park should be treated as a nationally significant resource versus treatment as a local park.
- Educate the public about the significance of the park and define what visitor actions are appropriate. Petersburg National Battlefield must be perceived by the community as a nationally significant cultural resource as well as a local park.
- Identify the differences between the perceptions of individual visitors and park personnel regarding what they are trying to protect.
- Identify community perceptions of both law enforcement rangers and the battlefield itself. Is it seen as a playground? A historic site? A recreational area?
- Determine the media image and perception of Petersburg National Battlefield and National Park Service programs in general.
- Develop regular ties to the local papers and other media to improve public relations. Publish either a newsletter or a series of articles in the local newspaper.

E. Interpretive programming.

Several actions were identified to modify or expand the interpretive program at PETE. Such changes presuppose adequate funding since many of the participants believed that outreach and interpretive programs are often cut first as funding becomes limited. The workshop participants felt that adequate

interpretive funding was extremely important for resolution of many problems.

Specific actions:

- Maintain the high quality of park museums and displays.
- Utilize park physical resources to the fullest extent practical. Evaluate the park and building operation hours in light of tourist and local population needs, e.g., should the park's visitor center be open from dawn to dusk as is the park?
- Operate living history programs throughout the year rather than just over 11 weeks in the summer. This would allow the park to accommodate bus tours which occur primarily in the spring and fall.
- Evaluate the message given to those who just drive through the park. What is the "windshield experience"? Develop something that is very easily accessible to encourage these transient tourists, who do not stop at the visitor center, to spend more time in the park and to understand the park better.
- Operate a small-scale active archaeological investigation on a continuing basis as an interpretive device providing both an inventory and a demonstration to help bring the past closer to the present.
- Expand the educational program to include genealogical types of information for battle participants (e.g., who fought where, were they killed, is the grave marked, etc.). This would enable visitors to track their heritage back from historic uses of the park during the Civil War (and other times).
- Assess the importance of the interpretive programs. Is the need for cultural interpretation being met at Petersburg National Battlefield? How important is the interpretative program at PETE? The park should utilize research at local universities to help develop programs.
- Provide more ecological interpretation at Petersburg National Battlefield (as well as more cultural interpretation). The necessary staff expansion could be accomplished either through more NPS employees or through local volunteers. Personnel limitations due to funding could be alleviated by volunteers from the local community and universities. These volunteers, however, must need minimal supervision since the park staff, at its present level, would not be able to provide full supervision.

- Identify management strategies for maintaining quality programming in the face of potential shortfalls in federal funding.
- Acquire funding for (1) a wayside exhibit at Fort Greg and (2) a visitor center annex.

II. COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES.

Resolution of the following problems was deemed more the responsibility of the community than of the park itself. Petersburg National Battlefield and the surrounding communities greatly affect each other; these impacts are both positive and negative. For example, the park is an economic resource for the community both in terms of tourism and economic development. However, surrounding noise levels negatively impact the visitor's experience.

A. Alternative recreational sites.

If park visitation at PETE is determined to be at or above its carrying capacity, alternative recreational and historical sites need to be identified and developed to minimize non-appropriate visitor use at PETE and encourage visitation to local historical attractions. Since the park is a national attraction, the park must inform people unfamiliar with the Petersburg area of the alternative opportunities in the region.

Specific actions:

- Develop sufficient alternative recreational sites outside of the park for visitors interested primarily in a recreational experience.
- Inform visitors of substitute activities and attractions to promote dispersal and use of alternative activities in the local communities.

B. Community perceptions of the park.

The significance and purpose of PETE are generally not recognized or appreciated by the local community. The community needs to recognize that PETE is a cultural resource of national

significance, not merely a local recreational park, and direct their actions accordingly.

Specific actions:

- Understand to what extent various activities are allowed.
- Coordinate the activities of Fort Lee with the park.

C. Funding.

Shortfalls in federal funding can have considerable impacts on Petersburg National Battlefield. The local community can help the park deal with these cutbacks.

Specific actions:

- Identify ways in which the local community can help alleviate funding problems (volunteers, etc.).
- Assess the impact of possible entrance fees on the local community.

III. JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES.

Many park management problems necessitate cooperative efforts between the park and the local community. Interpretive and promotional programs can be strengthened by ties between the park and the local school system and local and regional tourism agencies. In addition, educational programs should extend beyond park boundaries since the park includes only part of the acreage which was significant in the battle at Petersburg. Other coordination is necessary to determine and manage the various ways in which the park and the local community impact each other.

A. The park and the local school system.

The park is an educational and research resource for the community. Cooperation and communication between the park, the community, and the local school system needs to be strengthened and the educational role of the park in the community expanded.

Specific actions:

- Increase the awareness of the school community at all levels (including college) of the research potential of PETE and what is available at the site historically, geologically, biologically, and ecologically.
- Design a cooperative program where local teachers can get time off to participate in outreach programs to learn about both the park and the battle itself.
- Disperse school group visits throughout the year to better utilize the park resources.

B. The park and tourism agencies.

Petersburg National Battlefield is an important local and national publicity source for the City of Petersburg and the

surrounding communities. Functional links between the park and local and regional departments of tourism would help both the park and the tourism agencies.

Specific actions:

- PETE should make an effort to plan activities far enough in advance so that the local tourism department can promote the events in magazines, etc.
- Develop a promotional brochure for the park. Such a brochure, developed cooperatively by the park and local Department of Tourism, would enable better publicity and public relations.
- Place an employee of PETE on the Tourism Advisory Board or some other joint tourism group.

C. The park's educational role.

There is a long, continuous military history of the Petersburg area. Significant historical events occurred both within the current park boundaries and in the local community external to the park. Interpretive links between the park and the local community need to be developed in an effort to expand PETE's interpretive influence beyond its boundaries in a way similar to that of Colonial Williamsburg.

Specific actions:

- Broaden the interpretive program to place PETE and the local community in the historical context of military, country, and human experience.
- Develop historic sites within the city.
- Design a walking tour into the city.
- Develop interpretive links between the park and other attractions in the city.
- Develop educational programs using the cooperative efforts of the park, the Department of Tourism, the local museums, and the school district.

- Conduct more living history programs within the city. This expansion could also involve other parks in the area. Consider encampments or other programs to involve larger groups as participants.

Several workshop participants expressed their misgivings regarding this last action. As the interpretive program is expanded, attention must be given to concerns of the local Black community. Petersburg has a traditionally high percentage of Blacks in the population. The interpretive programs of PETE must bring the Black community into the Civil War as a participant as well as a spectator; the socio-cultural context of the historical event needs to be expanded. Although the National Park Service does not encourage reenactments, the Black community is concerned both about the context of Civil War interpretation in general and about potential Civil War reenactments in particular.

D. Adjacent development.

Commercial, industrial, and residential development outside the park boundaries impacts both the park and the visitor's experience. Several of the top ten actions address this general problem of managing and controlling external development, thus indicating the importance of this problem to management of a park in an urban environment.

There are two aspects of this general problem area. First, development adjacent to the park affects park management decisions. Second, development of sites external to the park yet important historically must be carried out so as to preserve their historical significance. Coordination between the park and external agencies can direct this interrelationship in a positive

direction. Proper management of peripheral areas can encourage development that does not destroy the cultural resources and the enjoyment of such by park visitors. While the impacts of development were not well considered in the past, federally funded projects now must assess the impacts of any development. Impacts on PETE should be considered in any long range plans whether development projects are federally funded or not.

Specific actions:

- The city of Petersburg and Prince George County should develop a comprehensive land use zoning plan for adjacent lands so that development and use is consistent with the purposes of the park and meets park protection needs.
- Assess the extent to which the park should be an entity for generating income for the community.
- Assess community encroachments (industrial, commercial, or residential) on the park with regard to their impacts on uses of the park and the relationship between park personnel and the community.
- Determine the impacts on the park of noise (in general) from surrounding development and adjacent activities. Though it is the responsibility of the park to educate the community about the impacts of noise, it is the responsibility of the community to minimize adverse noise.
- Encourage creation of a more pleasing approach to and exit from the park through communication between the park and the businesses along Washington St. and S. Crater Rd.
- Control development at Crater Rd. and Sycamore St. to prevent the continuing destruction of important battlefield sites.
- Develop attractive alternative routes to help redirect thru-traffic. Use of the park for thru-traffic creates maintenance, enforcement, and other problems for the park. Other means of minimizing this traffic (education, improved traffic flow on alternative routes, etc.) should also be considered.

The park and the local housing authority have had problems on several occasions in the past. Better communication between

these two entities is necessary. Also, the park must communicate with the local governments regarding use of privately-owned adjacent properties.

Specific actions:

- Conduct regular meetings between the park and the housing authority to discuss problems such as misuse of the park by tenants of the existing Pin Oaks development and the utilization of undeveloped property adjacent to the park.
- Develop a closer working relationship between the park and the local government regarding control of privately owned adjacent properties.

The appearance of the Petersburg National Battlefield does not reflect the actual battlefield scene due to pressures from the surrounding urban environment. For example, vegetation belts must be maintained to screen adjacent intrusive development from park visitors. This decline in the historic scene must be controlled as the surrounding area becomes increasingly urban.

Specific actions:

- Identify what the historic scene of the Petersburg area was and determine the extent to which it should be maintained.
- Restore, or control development in, adjacent areas to meet the needs determined by park management and local communities.

Many significant historical sites, not just those within the park boundaries, need to be preserved. The park and city could cooperate to manage these areas even if the park does not have any legal relationship to the specific resource. Through technical assistance, the park could encourage the community to use these areas properly. For example, there is no restriction on recreational traffic over the fortifications at Fort Walker (which is controlled by the city).

Specific actions:

- Develop communication channels to enable the park and local governments and planning departments to cooperatively manage significant sites external to PETE.
- Evaluate the effects of normal recreational traffic on the uncontrolled cultural resources at Fort Walker.
- Develop a more effective relationship between the park and local governments and planning departments regarding areas the park has no management or ownership control over but which the park has a legal, protective relationship to. Specifically, this refers to the area along Flank Road deeded to the city on which the park holds deed restrictions.

E. Park management and the local community.

Petersburg National Battlefield has a historical mission. The general lack of local understanding or appreciation of the historical significance of the park leads to inappropriate actions which create problems between park management and the local population. Greater education and communication are necessary to help the local community realize that PETE is not just open land or a local park or playground. Changing these community perceptions of the park was considered an important management problem for PETE.

Specific actions:

- Increase education and communication between the park and the local community to help identify and clarify the purpose of the park.
- Educate the community regarding laws as they relate to the park. Also, evaluate the relationships between law enforcement personnel and the local community and park visitors.
- Educate the local community about the causes and effects of arson in an effort to minimize its future occurrence.
- Encourage the use of the knowledge base of public participants from the local community. Expand the public

participation program by creating a task force, or other advisory group, to provide the type of information generated at this workshop on a regular basis.

F. Other coordination needs.

Other coordination problems identified by workshop participants concerned communication between National Park Service management and other groups whose decisions affect PETE, the information needs of park visitors and non-park visitors, and the sharing of visitor data between research agencies.

Specific actions:

- Encourage the park and the National Park Service to be actively involved in any local or state air and water quality implementation plans, laws, regulations, and statements.
- Provide information about the park and other local attractions to both visitors to the park and visitors to the Petersburg area who do not go to PETE ('non-park visitors'). Inform park visitors about other activities in the local communities and non-park visitors about the park.
- Conduct a baseline socio-economic study of park visitors and non-park visitors. The resulting information regarding user and non-user profiles should be exchanged between the various research units, park management, and local planning agencies. A research study should be carried out on the socio-economic and other impacts/benefits relating to PETE. This database should provide a continuous source of information regarding social, economic, physical, and cultural impacts.

CONCLUSION

As a park in a urban environment, Petersburg National Battlefield is highly affected by encroachments from adjacent development and uses. A cooperative management effort involving both the park and local communities is necessary to control these threats. In addition, greater coordination between the park and local and regional entities can enhance benefits from interpretation and education, tourism promotion, and local economic development.

The workshop approach used at Petersburg National Battlefield to identify the preceding management problems and resolution strategies was an important step in building this cooperative effort. Park managers, local leaders, and interest groups gathered to identify a broad range of problems and to suggest actions that both the park and community could take to seek resolution of these problems. Workshop participants felt that a group of park managers and local citizens should be formed to meet on a continuing basis. This group could further develop management strategies and priorities, discuss progress on resolution of the problems defined above, and identify new problems and management strategies for the park and community. Such a group could provide the basis for the communication and coordination that is necessary to manage Petersburg National Battlefield in the best way possible.

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