Hurricane Isabel Recovery Continues

Hurricane Isabel’s intensity had dropped only slightly by the time she reached central Virginia. Fortunately the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site resources were relatively unharmed, but the storm did not spare Richmond National Battlefield Park. Every unit of the park received some damage, and the Fort Harrison area alone lost approximately 1500 trees. Clean-up crews from across the United States were sent to the park and quickly opened roads and assessed damage to quantify future projects.

The impact was so severe that the recovery effort continues half a year later. Many large trees that fell across park roads were immediately removed, but others that wallowed irreplaceable historic earthworks had to wait until the appropriate equipment was available to remove the trees safely without damaging park resources. This work has begun at Fort Johnson, which is located along Battlefield Park Road in Varina.

Damage from the storm impacted 27 parks in three regions extending from the North Carolina coast to beyond Pennsylvania. To assist in the recovery 623 people were sent to the most heavily damaged sites. At one time more than 50 folks from other parks and agencies worked primarily along Battlefield Park Road. This effort did not go unnoticed. The park received many compliments from neighbors who were appreciative of the work that returned life almost to normal in a short amount of time.

These types of incidents that require mutual assistance illustrate that one of the greatest strengths of the National Park Service is our dedicated and capable staff.

Prescribed Burn at Cold Harbor Battlefield

The park conducted a 28 acre prescribed burn at the Cold Harbor unit on March 1. The objectives of the burn were to reduce the threat of wildfire by reducing the build-up of vegetation, to open up the historic scene, and to promote the growth of native tall grasses so that park visitors can get a feeling for the battlefield as it appeared during the Civil War. Fire also saves money on maintenance and enhances the Cold Harbor ecosystem, creating important habitat for birds.

Conditions such as wind direction, wind speed, smoke dispersion and fuel moisture were monitored frequently throughout the day to ensure that conditions continued to be safe. The fire successfully opened up the majority of the area, leaving occasional forest outcrops to serve as refuge for wildlife.

The park had 16 firefighters on hand to ensure that the fire was conducted safely. Assistance was received from Blackcreek Volunteer Fire Department, Beaverdam Volunteer Fire Department, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, as well as other Virginia National Parks, including Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Petersburg National Battlefield, Colonial National Historical Park, and Shenandoah National Park. The area is currently black, but in just a few months, will be green with vegetation.
Maggie L. Walker NHS Exhibit Planning Under Way

In 1985 the Maggie L. Walker NHS opened to the public, and since then visitors have viewed a series of temporary exhibits. Just recently the park received funding through the Fee Demonstration program for the development, fabrication and installation of new interpretive exhibits.

In January a planning session with the contractor and park staff focused on timelines, interpretive themes, and a strategy to insure that the completed exhibits will be ready for installation during February 2005, only 13 months from the start date. This is remarkable as some interpretive exhibit projects can take years for completion.

The interpretive themes that will guide the development of the new exhibits depart somewhat from the traditional Walker story. By expanding the context visitors will be able to understand the incredible hardships that confronted African Americans in the years following the Civil War, and the resolve necessary for Maggie Walker to achieve success under the harsh “Jim Crow” laws of the early 20th century. The exhibits will explore the spirit of activism that made Maggie Walker a national leader in the pursuit of civil rights for women. These stories combined with her establishment of the Penny Savings Bank, her leadership of the St. Luke organization, and her legacy of inspiration will help future audiences understand a more complete Maggie Walker.

Employee Profile: Ed Sanders

Ed Sanders is a Park Ranger in the Interpretive Division of Richmond National Battlefield Park and he considers himself fortunate to serve as the park’s Volunteer Coordinator. “This allows me to work with a group of motivated volunteers,” he says, including the many Living History groups that provide programs such as artillery and infantry firing demonstrations. “I always enjoy working with the groups because these programs helped spark my love of history many years ago.” Ed also serves as a Historic Weapons Instructor for the National Park Service, specializing in 19th Century artillery.

Ed started working at Richmond National Battlefield Park in the early 1980’s as a volunteer for the Living History program. “I was still in high school and too young to work for the park so I volunteered. My first few summers I was the drummer for the 98th New York Volunteer Infantry at Fort Harrison. I started out as a pretty pitiful drummer but eventually could scrape by. During college I continued on as a seasonal and was hired as a permanent employee upon graduation.” When asked why he joined the National Park Service Ed had this to say: “I have always had a great interest in the Civil War and wanted a career where I could pursue this interest. My experiences visiting the National Battlefields as a child and then volunteering at Richmond and getting to work with the exceptional staff led to my interest in the National Park Service.”

Ed was born overseas while his father served at the United States Consulate and was raised in Virginia. He and his wife enjoying traveling and visiting historical sites. They have one daughter.
**Park Mourns the Passing of Jim Gates**

It is with the deepest regret that Richmond National Battlefield Park announces the passing of one of its outstanding volunteers, James Gates. Jim had volunteered at the Cold Harbor battlefield almost every single day since the Visitor Center opened in 1995. His passion for studying the Civil War and sharing his knowledge with the public was evident to anyone that spent time with him. Each day he volunteered a few hours at the Visitor Center, enthusiastically greeting visitors and answering questions on the battle of Cold Harbor. Often he would lead the public on walking tours of the battlefield.

Jim’s assistance did not end with helping the public. When the park was looking for specific Civil War artifacts for display, Jim offered the items from his own collection. In the spring of 2000 Jim received the Northeast Region’s Interpretive Volunteer Award for his outstanding work at Cold Harbor. With all the support he gave and the visitors he touched, Jim’s enthusiasm for the park was still as strong the last day he volunteered as the first. As one visitor wrote the park after Jim’s tour, “The guide was as much a treasure as the site itself.” He will be greatly missed.

**Upcoming Events**
Richmond National Battlefield Park and Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site are preparing for several exciting special events this year. Please join us.

- **March 27** Womens’ History Month Program, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site
- **May 2-9** Historic Preservation Week Walking Tours, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site
- **May 15-16** Drewry’s Bluff Anniversary Program, Richmond National Battlefield Park
- **May 31** Memorial Day Program at Fort Harrison National Cemetery, sponsored by Richmond National Battlefield Park
- **June 26-27** Gaines’ Mill Anniversary Program, Richmond National Battlefield Park
- **July 10-11** Malvern Hill Anniversary Program, Richmond National Battlefield Park

**Retired Biology Professor Conducts Park Monitoring Program**

Richmond National Battlefield Park’s many streams create important habitat for a diverse community of plants, fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. However, because these habitats are so intricately tied to the lands surrounding them, they are often threatened by land uses outside of the park. In order for the park to protect these habitats and the communities they harbor, it must regularly monitor their health. This was begun in the fall with the help of a new program partnering the National Park Service and the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement. Using this partnership, the park was paired with Dr. Bernard Solon, a retired biology professor from Pennsylvania. Dr. Solon spent one month this fall inventorying the insects living out the early stages of their lives in park streams.

Because certain insects are more sensitive than others, their presence, along with the diversity of species present in the community, can quickly and effectively characterize the health of a stream habitat. In this way, Dr. Solon was able to report to the park the state of its water environments. Dr. Solon will return in the spring to teach park personnel how to capture and identify these insects, so that the park can carry out his work twice per year in the future, detecting and reversing any degradation of its stream environments so that it can protect the natural communities living within them.
“War Unrelenting”: Special Events Commemorate 1864 Campaign

Richmond National Battlefield Park, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park and Petersburg National Battlefield are joining with Orange, Stafford, Spotsylvania, Hanover, Henrico and Chesterfield counties, and the cities of Fredericksburg, Richmond, Petersburg and Hopewell to present a series of special events commemorating the 140th anniversary of the Overland Campaign. The following are just a few of the many exciting programs you can look forward to at Richmond National Battlefield Park this year. For a complete listing of events that follow the campaign from the battle of the Wilderness to the siege of Petersburg please visit www.leevsgrant1864.com

140th Anniversary Events for Richmond National Battlefield Park:

April 24  Richmond Civil War Day at Tredegar Iron Works

May 23  North Anna River Commemorative Program

May 30  Walking Tour of Totopotomoy Creek Battlefield

June 3  Walking Tour of Union Breakthrough at Cold Harbor

June 5-6  Cold Harbor Anniversary Program

June 12-13  Life in the Cold Harbor Trenches

July 15-18 “War at Our Doors: Virginia’s Civilians Amidst War”

August 7  Fort Harrison Interpretive Bike Tour

September 25-26  Fort Harrison Anniversary Program

September 26  Battle of New Market Heights Commemorative Event