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Cane River Creole National Historical Park

FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
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Final
General Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement

January 2001

Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Louisiana

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FINAL
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN /
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

CANE RIVER CREOLE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana

Prepared in cooperation with the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission

The *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* presented a preferred alternative and four other alternatives for the management, use, and preservation of resources and development at Cane River Creole National Historical Park. It also presented the purpose and significance of the park, visitor experience goals, and interpretive themes. The environmental consequences of each alternative were also evaluated. This abbreviated *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* includes only factual corrections and text clarifications to the draft document plus copies of agency and organization comment letters and the National Park Service's responses to public comments. For a full understanding of the final plan and impact statement, this abbreviated document must be combined with the draft plan.

In **Alternative 1**, the National Park Service's preferred alternative, the management emphasis would be on preserving and rehabilitating the landscapes, structures, and artifacts of the two national park units, Oakland and Magnolia Plantations, to reflect their appearance circa 1960. The major stories of the plantations would be presented, with slightly different interpretive approaches at each unit. At Oakland visitors would experience more interpreter-led programs and demonstrations about the working plantation. At Magnolia, visitors would have more of a discovery experience of the site through the use of various media. The park staff would establish strong partnerships with the community, including the development of a joint regional visitor center in the Natchitoches/Cane River area. **Alternative 2**, the status quo alternative, reflects ongoing actions at the park units and serves as a basis for comparing the other alternatives. Staffing and funding levels would remain at or near current levels. Visitor services would remain limited, and current laws, policies, and guidelines would guide resource management actions. Any development that is not tied to an approved plan would be designed to be temporary and reversible. In **Alternative 3** the ongoing research and preservation work would be used to tell the stories of the park and reflect its continuum of appearance up to circa 1960. Researchers and preservationists would help tell visitors about the work underway. A new visitor center at Oakland would provide in-depth interpretive services and displays about the park units. A park shuttle would provide alternative transportation to help reduce vehicular traffic to Magnolia Plantation. **Alternative 4's** management emphasis would be to allow visitors to discover and quietly explore the plantation sites through the preservation of the units' rustic character and the use of a variety of media. To support this, onsite development would be minimal, and the plantation would eventually reflect its appearance in circa 1948. The park staff would develop strong partnerships with the community, including the development of a regional shuttle system and an offsite joint regional visitor center. In **Alternative 5**, the park units would come to life as working plantations through substantial investment in interpretive and educational programs and personal services, including educational outreach. The plantation would look as it did in circa 1960. A relatively high level of new onsite development would be provided to accommodate higher visitation levels and facility maintenance needs. Basic visitor information for the region would be provided in partnership at a small offsite facility.

The impacts of implementing each of the alternatives described above are discussed in the "Environmental Consequences" section of the draft document. They include impacts on natural and cultural resources, visitor use and recreational resources, the socioeconomic environment, land uses and trends, and transportation corridors and circulation.

The *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* was released for formal review on June 17, 2000, and was on review for 60 days. Following the release of this final plan, there will be a 30-day no-action period. At the conclusion of this period, a "Record of Decision" documenting the approved plan will be issued. For further information, please contact the superintendent, Cane River Creole National Historical Park, 4386 Highway 494, Natchez, LA 71456, (318) 352-0383.

U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service
Cane River National Heritage Area Commission

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

This document is an abbreviated *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* for Cane River Creole National Historical Park. The material included here is to be combined with the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (DEIS No. 000183), which was distributed for public review in June 2000. The 60-day public review period ended August 15, 2000. The abbreviated format has been used because the changes to the draft document are relatively minor and do not modify the analysis provided in the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (draft plan).

Use of this format is in compliance with the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act regulations (40 CFR 1503.4(c)). The draft and

final documents together describe the full final plan, its alternatives, all significant environmental impacts, and the comments that have been received and evaluated and responses to them.

Following the announced release of this *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* in the *Federal Register*, there will be a 30-day no-action period. A "Record of Decision" of the approved final plan will then be signed by the regional director, Southeast Region, National Park Service, and copies will be made available to the public.

For further information, please contact the superintendent, Cane River Creole National Historical Park, 4386 Highway 494, Natchez, LA 71456, (318) 352-0383.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES ON THE DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

This section summarizes the agency, organization, and public comments received on the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*. These comments enable interested parties (including NPS decision-makers) to review and assess how other agencies, organizations, and individuals have responded to the proposed actions and alternatives and their potential impacts. The National Park Service provides responses to those comments that are considered substantive or when responses are helpful for clarification or other purposes.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT DOCUMENT

The draft document was mailed to the public during the second week of June 2000. The official review and comment period began on June 17, 2000, and ended on August 15, 2000. Approximately 350 copies of the document were distributed through the initial mailing, at public meetings, and upon request. The document's availability and the schedule of public meetings were announced through local media and by letter to the park's mailing list. Public reading copies were made available at local libraries and other local institutions.

The draft document was also sent out certified return receipt mail in June 2000 to 11 tribes (federally and state recognized) that have been identified as having a cultural affiliation with the park. The tribes were asked to review the draft document and provide the National Park Service with comments. In July all tribes were telephoned, with a request for any comments on the draft document. Six tribes responded that they had no comments at this time. A number of the tribal representatives commented that the document was well written and comprehensive. One tribe commented that they preferred minimal development at the park. Another tribe commented that they were

concerned that there would not be adequate parking at the Magnolia unit during peak visitation periods. The other three tribes were left messages and voice-mails soliciting their comments on the draft document, but did not respond.

Two public meetings were held on June 21, 2000 — one at the Natchitoches Art Center in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and the other at St. Augustine Catholic Church in Cane River, Louisiana. There were a total of approximately 43 members of the public who attended. A small meeting with members of the Louisiana Creole Heritage Center was held on June 20, 2000, at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. The fourth and last meeting on June 22, 2000 was with state agency representatives in the governor's pressroom in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

A total of 19 written responses were received during the comment period. Also, comments and questions voiced by people who attended the public meetings were recorded. The public's comments have been reviewed and considered by the Park Service in preparing this *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*, consistent with the requirements of 40 CFR 1503.

Summary of Meeting Comments

Comments at the two public meetings were generally supportive of the planning effort and of the preferred alternative. Public input included questions about procedure — how the preferred alternative was selected, when the plan can be funded and implemented, how flexible is the plan in case conditions change, and whether all of the alternatives could be implemented instead of just one. There were questions about pedestrian safety due to the high speed of traffic on the local roads and the level of traffic anticipated in the future; and

concerns about where buses could park at Magnolia and about where the shuttle would stop in alternatives 3 and 4. There were hopes that the Park Service would still find a way in the preferred alternative to use animals to demonstrate plantation operations, even if they were not housed onsite. Other questions focused on the use of the doctor's house, when the gin barn would be accessible, and what items would be sold at the store.

The meeting with the Louisiana Creole Heritage Center members was a small group discussion that focused on primarily four areas of concern. First, there were various concerns about Creole-related issues: more accurate language needed in the "What is Creole?" section, lack of emphasis on Creole interpretation at the park, and concerns about how the park could help keep the past alive because so much of the region's heritage is disappearing. Second, there was interest in seeing more discussion in the plan of the French aspects of the park's/region's history — including Catholicism as an integral part of Creole culture and French architecture and landscape elements. A third topic was the approach the park would take on doing interpretive planning. The center asked to see a comprehensive approach to future interpretive planning for the region that was done in consultation with the center and where interpretive planning for the park and heritage area would be combined. And fourth, the center members discussed the need for better curatorial facilities and an interest in Northwestern State University potentially partnering with the park, with an option of the university providing land and the Park Service providing a curatorial facility.

In the meeting with state agency representatives, most of the attendees were from various offices of the State Department of Culture, Tourism and Recreation. The group was generally supportive of the preferred alternative. Questions included such topics as when the plan could be implemented, the schedule of work on buildings, the role of the state historic preservation office in future efforts, and hopes that the park would be hiring a staff archeolo-

gist and curator. There were questions about the shuttle in alternative 4 — the public's level of support and whether the National Park Service could reconsider a shuttle later when there is greater demand. There was interest in whether the National Park Service planned to purchase additional land at Oakland, particularly the cemetery. And there was interest in whether the community had any concerns about economic impacts.

Summary of Written Comments

Comments were received from 12 individuals. The majority of these individuals were generally supportive of the draft document and the preferred alternative (alternative 1). There was support expressed specifically for having the visitor center offsite and for restoring the buildings and furnishing the main house. Even with this support, various comments were made voicing preferences or concerns, primarily for seeing aspects of other alternatives added to or replacing actions in the preferred alternative. For example, there were comments received from individuals and the Louisiana state historic preservation officer that using 1948 as the cutoff date would result in demolition, major alteration, and relocation of some structures, which would damage historic fabric and impact the historic character of the sites.

A concern expressed in writing, but also heard frequently at meetings, is that the National Park Service be sure to present the stories of the plantations using authentic data rather than speculation because so much documentation about these sites is available. Several comments from the public emphasized how important they thought it was to acquire the remaining acreage within the park's authorized boundary at Oakland. There were several comments about wanting to see the doctor's house at Oakland Plantation more accessible to the public and used for activities more directly linked to the site's history than park offices. Others expressed a preference to see a new joint visitor center located directly off a major highway so that such a location would capture

the attention of more visitors who would otherwise be unaware of such facilities. Some preferences were to locate the visitor center south of Natchitoches, possibly at the I-49 Cypress interchange. The Park Service was asked to consider having craft demonstrations and animals onsite, either full time or at least occasionally. Also, there was support expressed for a boat dock at Oakland to help add access options and reduce traffic and a shuttle to Magnolia Plantation and other sites in the area.

Also, concern was expressed about public safety, especially regarding the proximity of the river and a need to stabilize riverbanks and the proximity of the road to plantation buildings and where visitors may be walking.

One commentor was concerned about how the National Park Service was approaching the discussion of "Creole" in the "What Is Creole?" section and elsewhere in the document. There were concerns that the definitions and discussion provided focused too much on racial distinctions rather than stressing the cultural connotation of the term — one meaning of which is New World adaptations of French, Spanish, African, and American Indian cultures to the natural world and each other. The commentor stated that there were not enough historical and cultural perspectives given on the evolution of the word Creole and the conflicts engendered by the word. Also, concern was expressed that what is the unique part of American history here is not the plantation experience, but how that plantation experience is rooted in the Latin (French-Spanish/Catholic) colonial experience that resulted in the mixture and adaptation of people and culture, the product being Creole.

There were other points of factual clarification and correction in various public comments that we have tried to address through corrected text in the next section. Other comments addressed topics that dealt more specifically with planning for the Cane River National Heritage Area. Many of these concerns will be addressed through that effort.

There were seven agencies or organizations that responded in writing. These letters have been reproduced at the end of this document. Of these, only the letters from the state historic preservation officer and the City of Natchitoches Fire Department had comments that required responses. The others either documented their support of the plan and preferred alternative, with some variations, or noted that the proposed actions were consistent with existing regulations or were not going to impact resource values for which that agency was responsible.

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS

A. Interpretation about the lives of Creoles of color at the park.

Based on current research, a number of Creoles of color were associated with the two park units. These individuals and the role they played in the history of the plantations would be interpreted. If further research reveals that other Creoles of color played roles, then they also would be interpreted. However, Creoles of color are more strongly associated with the stories of the Cane River National Heritage Area, and this larger story would be told better through heritage area partnership efforts. The joint regional visitor center would be an excellent location to introduce that story.

B. Clarification of the origin of many of the Creoles of color.

We have clarified the parentage of many of the Creoles of color through a text change on page 4.

C. Ensuring cultural and historical perspectives on Creole culture.

The National Park Service did not try to provide a "correct" or comprehensive definition of the term Creole in the "What Is Creole?" section, but rather tried to show how there are many different definitions and perspectives about the term.

The park's purpose and significance statements and interpretive themes clearly emphasize the major importance of the historical convergence of different colonial and American Indian cultures in this region and the resulting complex and diverse culture that resulted. It is these statements and themes that will guide future interpretive planning for the park. (Similar statements and themes have been developed for the heritage area.) Aspects of future interpretation will highlight regional Creole cultural characteristics evident in such things as language, foodways, architecture, horticulture, customs, and religion.

D. More reference to French elements of the culture.

In response to concerns that we have not recognized certain French aspects of the Creole culture, we have added more references to French influences.

E. Manage the park's landscape to a timeframe later than 1948.

The National Park Service has re-evaluated the use of the 1948 date of significance for landscape preservation (alternatives 1 [preferred] and 4) compared to the 1960 date (alternatives 3 and 5). Based on concerns expressed by the public and Louisiana state historic preservation officer, the preferred alternative has been modified to propose the date of significance to be circa 1960. By doing this, the potential impacts on structures from removing, altering, or moving them to a pre-1960 location would be eliminated. Other ways can be used to illustrate to the public what the landscape may have looked like at different times in its history. Also, the use of the 1960 date for making cultural landscape management decisions does not prevent the park from depicting how life on the plantation changed from one period to the next through programs and interpretive exhibits. Using a 1960 date also does not commit the National Park Service to perpetuating building treatments used during the 1950s that are damaging to the structure. The paramount responsibility is to protect the resources, even if that means in

certain circumstances that certain building treatments would reflect an earlier timeframe.

The impact analysis of this 1960 date has been provided under alternatives 3 and 5, and this language has been added to the preferred alternative to replace the earlier language regarding the 1948 date. Also, the Alternative 1 maps have been revised to reflect this change.

F. Highway traffic and pedestrian safety.

Public safety is always a concern as well as an ongoing management responsibility of the National Park Service. At the general management plan level, public safety measures are incorporated into the conceptual layout of parking and circulation by trying to focus visitor movement away from the roads. When this is not practical, designs are used to separate the public from the roads as much as possible. Park programs and media would also be used to help inform and caution visitors about safety concerns. In addition, the Park Service would work with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to help ensure that highway speeds are set at safe levels and appropriate cautionary signs are in place.

G. Keep animals onsite for park programs and to provide rustic character.

Under the preferred alternative, park management has the flexibility to bring farm animals to the park units for special programs. This has already been done and was well received by the public; it also significantly reduces the long-term expense for housing, feeding, and providing veterinary care for park-owned animals while still providing opportunities to see, hear, and smell the animals and better understand how they were used in plantation operations. NPS ownership of animals also introduces potential liability issues and animal waste management problems, issues that are considerably lessened when ownership resides with other entities.

H. Public access to the doctor's house.

The interior of the doctor's house at Oakland has been significantly modernized and modified, and inadequate information is available that would allow the park to accurately restore the house's interior. However, special behind-the-scenes tours inside the house could be arranged for the public. Also, the structure and its significance would be interpreted to the public from outside the structure.

I. Build a joint regional visitor center complex (and curatorial facility) in the Cypress area near I-49.

Finding the best location for the joint visitor center will require consultation with cooperating agencies and organizations. There will be need to be an analysis of potential sites in the Natchitoches/Cane River region that will include an environmental assessment. That assessment is important to ensure that, for example, the site selected does not contain resources that could be significantly impacted through development of a facility, and that the site is not contaminated with hazardous materials. The Cypress area could be one of the sites analyzed when funding becomes available for visitor center site planning. This same type of site planning would be needed for analyzing appropriate offsite locations for other park facilities, such as maintenance and curation.

J. Place park maintenance, interpretation, and preservation in the doctor's house and use the seed house as an educational area for groups, etc.

There is inadequate space to place all of this staff as well as maintenance equipment and workspace in the doctor's house. The seed house would be the best temporary location for most of the maintenance activities. Once a permanent maintenance facility for the entire park is developed, then the seed house would be used as an educational area for groups.

K. Install a boat dock at Oakland and perhaps have boat trips on the river.

For the projected 10- to 15-year life of this plan, constructing a boat dock would be a very high cost to the taxpayer relative to the limited use anticipated. Also, ensuring a safe crossing of LA 494 is an ongoing management concern. Once the park is better established and visitation patterns are known, the development of a boat dock could be analyzed in the next general management plan.

L. Concerns about buses and the unstable riverbank at Magnolia. (Is there any way to bring vehicles to the back of Magnolia, as at Oakland, to avoid the riverbank and safety problems between pedestrians and cars?)

Private ownership, access difficulties, and concerns about protecting cultural resource values made it infeasible to plan parking in the rear of the site away from the road and riverbank. Regarding pedestrian safety, refer to response F above.

Although the National Park Service does not own the river bank or roadway in front of Magnolia Plantation, it will coordinate with the highway department, levee board, and other appropriate agencies, to ensure that all necessary precautions are taken to maintain riverbank stability and protect park resources. Early in the planning process, consideration was given to acquiring or obtaining permission to park busses along the riverbank on the other side of LA 119. However, concerns about bank stability and pedestrian safety quickly eliminated that option from further consideration.

M. Can the concept of a shuttle be considered later, when there may be enough visitors to justify one?

The concept of a shuttle as solely an NPS-funded enterprise has been rejected as part of the preferred alternative primarily due to costs. However, the concept of a shuttle as a partnership endeavor continues to be supported in the community through the planning efforts of the Cane River National Heritage Area

Commission. The creation of a privately financed or a public-private joint-initiative shuttle system can certainly be considered at any time in the future. This concept could also be reconsidered in the next general management planning effort for the park when there would be a better understanding of visitation levels, patterns, and need.

N. In alternative 4's shuttle proposal, why weren't other shuttle stops considered?

The shuttle stops considered in this alternative were chosen to provide the transportation consultant a basis by which to make a general evaluation of the approximate length of time and number of vehicles needed for a shuttle system. The four sites do or will draw a significant percentage of visitors to the heritage area corridor. Should some system be developed in the future, other shuttle stops could be evaluated then.

O. Reservation system at Magnolia.

Under the preferred alternative, the reservation system would be in place in phase 1 only until a parking area and adequate staff are available onsite at Magnolia. As discussed in the draft document, under phase 2 of the preferred alternative, a reservation system could be used as a way to manage visitors if visitation levels begin to significantly impact park resources or the visitor experience. However, other visitor management methods might also be considered if visitation levels begin to exceed the site's carrying capacity. (Please refer to appendix D in the draft document.)

P. Locate RV park on lands behind Oakland Plantation

The park has no authority to take actions on lands it does not own. Private property owners can choose to take actions with their land consistent with any current parish zoning or land use restrictions.

Q. Purchase the adjacent 144 acres of land at Oakland Plantation.

This interest on the part of several commentors is consistent with the proposed

plan. However, this acreage is in private ownership, and it is totally up to the owners to decide if they are willing to sell the property to the National Park Service. If and when they are willing, then the National Park Service can enter into discussions about acquisition, but not until then.

R. Use of research and documentation to tell the stories.

The National Park Service has and continues to add to a rich collection of research and data that documents much about plantation life and operations at both Magnolia and Oakland Plantations. Whenever possible, this data will be the source of information in printed park materials and programs for visitors. Also, the park will be hiring a historian who will be able to ensure the accuracy of interpretive programs.

S. What was the rationale for choosing the preferred alternative?

Please refer to appendix C in the draft document for an explanation of the process used. Minor modifications to the preferred alternative since printing the *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* are in response to comments and concerns received from agencies, organizations, or members of the general public.

T. When can the plan be funded and implemented?

Funding requests specific to the plan as well as implementation actions can occur following the issuance of the National Park Service's "Record of Decision." This document records the agency's official decision and is issued at least 30 days following the release of this *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*.

U. Plan flexibility

Should conditions change that make aspects of the general management plan infeasible or impractical to implement within the next 10 to 15 years, the plan can be

amended or revised to respond to current conditions and needs.

V. Fire protection

National Park Service policy requires the park to develop and implement a structural fire plan. The park has been in contact with parish fire and police offices regarding this issue. Fire

protection precautions are being developed consistent with NFPA codes. Precautions will include the location of fire hydrants and fire hose houses at strategic places at each site. Fire detectors and fire sprinklers will be installed in several of the park's larger structures. The detector system will be linked into the local fire department.

CORRECTIONS TO THE DRAFT PLAN

For the reader's convenience, those pages of the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* on which changes have been made have been reproduced in the following pages. Text that is to be removed from the draft document appears as ~~strikeout~~. Text to be added appears with an underline. For ease of reference back to the draft document, the original section title and page number is provided at the top of the corrected page. If the changes resulted in the text flowing onto another page, the pages are listed, for example, as page 110 A and 110 B.

The changes of note between the draft and final plan include the following

- In the preferred alternative (alternative 1), Oakland and Magnolia Plantations would be preserved and rehabilitated to reflect their appearance circa 1960 instead of 1948. The text under alternative 1 has been revised to reflect this change, and the alternative 1 map for Oakland Plantation has been updated to show that the tractor shed at Oakland would be not removed as a result of this date change.

- Text has been added/corrected to clarify the "What is Creole?" discussion.
- Text has been added to recognize French influences on the Creole culture.
- The "Historical Overview" section has been revised to correct facts about the founding of Natchitoches and the construction of Fort St. Jean Baptiste

Other minor factual corrections, which are not reproduced in these pages, are as follows:

- Caroline Dormon's name should be Dorman (page 25, 3rd line from the bottom of the first full paragraph, and page 136, beginning at the end of line 8 in the first paragraph.
- The completion of the "Collections Management Plan" is scheduled for summer 2001 instead of October 2000 (page 26, third line of last full paragraph in the right column).
- Choahuila, Mexico, should be Coahuila, Mexico (page 29, 9th line down in first column).

15 years in opening the park to the public, managing the park's resources, telling the history of the Cane River area, and providing assistance to the heritage area to preserve and conserve cultural resources and traditions and develop public education programs about the area. This management plan for Cane River Creole National Historical Park presents five alternative approaches to managing the park. The process of developing these alternatives included field studies and research, involvement of the commission through monthly meetings and several workshops, public meetings with the community in the Natchitoches and Cane River area, and meetings with subject-matter experts. These planning alternatives are purposely general to allow for future flexibility. Full implementation will take many years, and resource conditions and opportunities may change over time.

Under **alternative 1**, the National Park Service's preferred alternative, management emphasis of the park would be on preserving and rehabilitating the landscapes, structures, and artifacts of the two national park units, setting up basic operations to manage and maintain the resources, and establishing a quality onsite visitor experience and strong partnerships with the community. The plantations would (eventually) reflect the ~~appearance of the plantations when they were still family-run plantations reliant on a resident labor force (circa 1948)~~ continuum of history up to about 1960. This would result in few changes to the current configuration of plantation structures or general appearance of the landscape. (For further discussion about this date, refer to the "Cultural Resources" section in the "Affected Environment" chapter.) By 1960, both plantations had ~~stopped being traditional family-run operations and plantation property was being sold or leased out to other farmers, the operations were mechanized, and the sharecroppers and tenant farmers had left to pursue work elsewhere.~~ The long history of the plantations and the major cultural, social, and economic stories of Louisiana plantation lifeways and agriculture that they represent would be told

(interpreted) to the public. Based on research and documentation, accounts of the lives and lifestyles of people who lived and worked at the plantations would be shared through media and programs.

The presentation of these stories would differ at the two units. Initially at Oakland, the park's stories would be told through ongoing research and preservation activities, and researchers and preservationists would interface with the public and help interpret work underway. As these activities lessen, the stories would be brought to life by providing a very active visitor experience that would include not just exhibits, but also interpreter-led programs and demonstrations. At Magnolia visitors would have a quieter, more contemplative discovery experience of the site's landscape and structures primarily through the use of more passive media such as brochures, wayside exhibits, or audiotapes. Some onsite interpretation of ongoing research or preservation projects would occur, phasing out as work was completed. However, special events would occur at both sites several times a year. The intent of this low-key experience would be to provide a quality program while trying to limit the amount of impact on this small site. A reservation system could be used to manage future visitation levels.

New development at both sites would include parking areas for cars and buses. An outdoor pavilion-style shelter/entry portal and eventually a maintenance facility would be constructed at or near the Oakland Plantation. The National Park Service would help develop a joint regional visitor center and headquarters in the Natchitoches/Cane River area that would include information and interpretive exhibits on Cane River heritage and provide a variety of educational and interpretive opportunities. Also, park managers would pursue the possibility of developing a joint curatorial facility, possibly as part of the joint visitor complex. The park would take a strong role in providing assistance to heritage area partners, primarily through cooperative agreements, and in accomplishing education and preservation

in the following text to describe the different ways the term is interpreted.

The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary offers the following definitions of the word Creole:

1. *A person of European descent born esp. in the West Indies or Spanish America.*
2. *A white person descended from early French or Spanish settlers of the U.S. Gulf States and preserving their speech and culture.*
3. *A person of mixed French or Spanish and black descent speaking a dialect of French or Spanish.*
4. *a: a language evolved from pidginized French that is spoken by blacks in Southern Louisiana b: HAITIAN c not cap: a language that has evolved from a pidgin but serves as the native language of a speech community.*

The most widely known Creole communities are those of the West Indies and the southern United States, but there are also Creole communities in Vietnam, India, Europe, and west and southern Africa. The ethnic groups that have blended to form these Creole cultures are varied according to the cultural contacts that have occurred in their respective regions of the world.

Some of the local views about the term are not reflected in the dictionary definition; however, the use of that definition effectively demonstrates some of the numerous meanings accorded the term.

Historically, the terms *criollo* (Spanish), *crioulo* (Portuguese) and *creole* (French) meant people born in a country that differed from their parents' birthplace, a term with political connotations regarding nationality and its privileges. Thus, locally born enslaved people were *creole* or *crioulo* in contrast to African-born slaves, and locally born Spaniards or French people were *criollo* or *creole*, respectively, if they were born in Louisiana, rather than Spain or France. In 18th century Louisiana, the term Creole referred to locally born slaves and was used in court cases to differentiate them from slaves born elsewhere. When the United States took official control of Louisiana, Creole was used to differentiate between those who were native to Louisiana and those who were

Anglo-American. Thus French-speaking white residents of Louisiana were also Creole.

A commonly accepted definition of the Louisiana Creole culture is a mixture of predominantly French, African, and American traits, but it includes traces of Spanish and American Indian cultures as well. Louisiana Creoles formed their own language, folklore, music, religion, and customs by combining European and African traditions. The ports and trade routes of the area made it a cultural crossroads and, as a result, the inhabitants of Louisiana were also exposed to additional cultural influences. In the area around Cane River Creole National Historical Park, the term Creole often refers to the descendants of multicultural, multiethnic people who lived in this area of the Red River before 1803. It refers to descendants of the early French and Spanish families who may or may not be multiethnic. The term Creole refers to "Creoles of color," many of whom are descended from Marie Thérèse Coin-Coin and Augustine Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer. and French-Creoles.

The Cane River area is rich in evidence of this multicultural heritage. The plantations and historic districts hold architectural traces of all the aforementioned cultures. The documents and artifacts contained therein also tell the story of complex Creolization out of the necessity to create identity within a plantation system's multicultural society.

The term Creole is also a cultural label indicating New World adaptations of French, Spanish, African, and American Indian cultures both to the natural world of Louisiana and to each other. The Cane River area is rich in evidence of this multicultural heritage. The religious and social focus of most Creole communities continues to be the Catholic Church, brought to the area by the French and Spanish early in the 18th century. Creole foodways exhibit elements of French, Spanish, African, and American Indian foods and cooking methods. Many of these foods, as well as local crafts, are linked to native and Old World plants that continue to be cultivated in the local area. The settlement patterns still in evidence on the landscape reflect a French arpent (land measurement) system that was adapted to the Louisiana landscape of river levees and back

swamps and bayous. The live oaks that are such a distinctive element of the Cane River landscape, especially those planted to form allées, were brought into the region by colonists, and many date to the Spanish period.

The plantations and historic districts hold architectural traces of all the aforementioned cultures. The main house at Oakland Plantation is an excellent example of a raised Creole cottage, a form of French Creole colonial architecture adapted for the climate, landscape, and materials available in Louisiana. The documents and artifacts of the region also help tell the complex story of creolization — out of the necessity to create ethnic identities within a

plantation system's multicultural society. Although the Black community does not traditionally identify itself with the term "Creole," this community is an integral part of this region's story and culture.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK

The park and heritage area are in northwestern Louisiana in Natchitoches Parish (a parish is similar to a county in other states). The parish is about 150 miles northwest of Baton Rouge and 70 miles southeast of Shreveport (see Regional Context and Vicinity maps). The largest city in the parish is Natchitoches, which is also the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana

ALTERNATIVE 1: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

CONCEPT

The management emphasis at Cane River Creole National Historical Park would be on preserving and rehabilitating the landscapes, structures, and artifacts of the two national park units, setting up basic operations to manage and maintain the resources, and establishing a quality visitor experience onsite and strong partnerships with the community. The physical treatment of the plantation's landscape, including structures, would generally reflect the appearance of the ~~plantations when they were still family-run plantations reliant on a resident labor force (circa 1948). This would involve the removal of post-1948 structures and the relocation and alteration of other buildings and landscape features.~~ would reflect the continuum of history up to about 1960. This would result in few changes to the current configuration of plantation structures or general appearance of the landscape. (For further discussion about this date, refer to the "Cultural Resources" section in the "Affected Environment" chapter.) By 1960, both plantations had stopped being traditional family-run operations and plantation property was being sold or leased out to other farmers, the operations were mechanized, and the sharecroppers and tenant farmers had left to pursue work elsewhere. (For further discussion about this date, refer to the "Cultural Resources" section of the "Affected Environment.") The long history of the plantations, and the major social and economic stories of Louisiana plantation lifeways and agriculture that they represent, would be interpreted to the public. Accounts of the lives, the different lifestyles, and perspectives of people that lived and worked at the plantations would be shared through media and programs and would be based on research and documentation. The way these stories would be presented to the public would differ at the two units, with two very different approaches recommended.

Initially at Oakland, the park would focus on a relatively intensive program of research and historic preservation, using these activities and the knowledge gained from them as the focus of the park's interpretive and educational program. The researchers and preservationists would play an important role in interfacing with the public and helping interpret the work underway. Onsite preservation and research activities would be used to help interpret the park stories.

As those activities lessen, the site would then be developed to actively interpret the life of the working plantation through exhibits, demonstrations, interpreter-led programs, and special events.

At Magnolia, visitors would have a quieter, more contemplative discovery experience that would be based primarily on the integrity and character of the site's landscape and on interpretive media such as brochures, wayside exhibits, or taped tours. Some onsite interpretation of ongoing research or preservation projects at Magnolia would occur, gradually phasing out as work is completed. Also, special events would be held here several times a year.

At both units, after the park is open and visitor use patterns are fairly well established, a carrying capacity analysis would be done (see the "Future Plans and Studies Needed" chapter and appendix D).

On a regional level, the park would be a leader in developing various partnerships with the community to assist in Cane River area research and technical assistance in cultural resource preservation and heritage education. Onsite, partnership agreements would focus on providing visitors opportunities to learn about cultural landscape and historic preservation methods and cultural lifeways and traditions.

 CORE PLANTATION MANAGEMENT AREA

 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AREA

 ADMINISTRATIVE ADAPTIVE USE MANAGEMENT AREA

 INTERIOR INTERPRETATION
HISTORIC STRUCTURES WHOSE INTERIORS WOULD BE ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS. MAY INCLUDE INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS, DEMONSTRATIONS, TALKS, OR TOURS

 EXTERIOR INTERPRETATION
HISTORIC STRUCTURES WHOSE FEATURES WOULD BE INTERPRETED FROM THE OUTSIDE



ALTERNATIVE ONE PREFERRED

OAKLAND PLANTATION

CANE RIVER CREOLE
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
LOUISIANA

PHASE ONE:
ENTRANCE ROAD,
PARKING, TRAIL
(CONCEPTUAL DESIGN)

PHASE TWO:
ACQUIRE REMAINING 144
ACRES IN AUTHORIZED
BOUNDARY TO PROTECT
PARK RESOURCES.

PHASE TWO:
SUITABLE FOR
MAINTENANCE FACILITY
DEVELOPMENT IF
OFF-SITE DEVELOPMENT
SITE UNAVAILABLE

PHASE ONE:
POST 1960
COTTON PICKER
SHED TO BE
REMOVED

MAIN HOUSE
FURNISHED
PLANTATION
HOUSE &
PARK OFFICE

PHASE ONE:
CONSTRUCT ENTRANCE
PAVILION. PROVIDE
VISITOR INFORMATION
AND RESTROOMS

**MULE
BARN**

PLANTATION STORE
SALES OUTLET
INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

SEED HOUSE
PHASE ONE:
ADAPT FOR MAINTENANCE
FACILITY; PROVIDE STAFF
PARKING AND ACCESS.
(ALIGNMENT TO BE
DETERMINED)

**BARN
STORAGE**

**OVERSEER'S
HOUSE**

DOCTOR'S HOUSE
PARK OFFICES

PHASE TWO:
CONVERT TO EDUCATIONAL
SPACE FOR GROUPS

QUARTERS

QUARTERS

FIELD
USE FOR
DEMONSTRATION CROPS



0 200 400 FEET

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- **the overseer's house** – This structure would contain exhibits and be the site of occasional interpretive programs. Some limited storage of materials might be possible.
- **the quarters** – The two quarters structures would be used to interpret stories associated with the people, lifeways, and events associated with those structures including the slavery and tenant periods as revealed through further research.
- **the Oakland Plantation store** – This would be the site of a cooperating association sales outlet for books, postcards, and similar materials. On display would be plantation store artifacts, and the site would be interpreted.

The following structures would be preserved and interpreted from the outside with no visitor access to the interior. Plantation lifeways and operations would continue to be the focus of interpretation, and interpretive demonstrations could occur at these sites:

- the pigeonniers
- the carpenter shop
- the wagon shed (potential site for the display of a wagon)
- the carriage house (potential site for the display of a carriage)
- the cook's cabin
- the gristmill
- other outbuildings, such as chicken coops, fattening pen, sheds, and washhouse
- the tractor shed

Consistent with the concept that the physical appearance of the plantation would reflect the ~~late 1940s~~ circa 1960 date, the following structures would be removed from the site following full documentation because ~~they~~ it represents a later ~~period~~ date:

- the cotton picker shed
- ~~the tractor shed~~

In addition to the site's historic structures, the associated landscapes and artifacts would be

rehabilitated/preserved as appropriate and consistent with the ~~late 1940s~~ circa 1960 time-frame. For example, the bottle garden, the live oak allée, historic travel ways, hedgerows, etc. would be documented, preserved, and interpreted along with other significant landscape elements.

Administrative Adaptive Use Area. Initially, administrative facilities and services would be onsite in existing structures. These structures might serve as the park staff's primary office/workshop space for several years.

- **the doctor's house** – Park offices would be in the doctor's house and would also provide meeting space for park staff.
- **the doctor's barn** – This structure would be used for park storage and maintenance.
- **the seed house** – The park's primary indoor maintenance functions would be accommodated onsite through the limited adaptive use of the seed house. An access road to the seed house and staff parking would be developed off LA 494.

Land Protection. The park would work cooperatively with the landowners and others to minimize any potential harmful impacts of use and development of the nonfederal portion of the Oakland Plantation unit. Interim measures to protect resource values would be pursued as necessary through agreements or other methods.

Phase Two

Development Management Area. Adjustments might be needed in the parking area to better reflect the ratio of cars to buses and recreational vehicles, once visitation patterns are better established. Substantial expansion of parking could occur, but should be supported by a carrying capacity analysis (see the "Future Plans and Studies Needed" chapter and appendix D).

In time, the space needed to support an adequate maintenance program for the national park units

and also provide basic safety and site orientation information and interpretive media, restrooms, and water fountains.

A pathway system would be developed to provide visitors access through the site and to the buildings and other structures or viewpoints that would be part of the interpretive program. An interpretive plan would be necessary to identify the best pathway route as well as the overall interpretive program. Interpretive media (such as wayside exhibits, tape tours, and brochures) would facilitate visitor exploration of the sites and ensure solitude and an atmosphere for contemplation and discovery. Onsite ranger-led interpretive programs would be provided on a limited basis.

The process needed to get the site's resources rehabilitated and ready for use would occur gradually, as funds were available. Much of the park's initial construction funding has allowed substantial strides in stabilizing structures for future rehabilitation and exhibit preparation. The following structures would be preserved and made accessible to visitors. All of these buildings may include exhibits of park artifacts (or reproductions if appropriate).

- **the Magnolia Plantation store** — Visitors would obtain their initial orientation at the plantation store, which would be adapted to provide visitor information and interpretive services. Plantation store artifacts would be displayed and interpretation provided about the role of the store as the social and economic center of the plantation. This facility would be staffed and some office space would be provided. Restrooms and water fountains would also be provided here.
- **the overseer's house/slave hospital** — This structure would contain exhibits and possibly some limited storage.
- **the quarters (two)** — The interior of these structures' would be preserved, and certain features (such as flooring) would be restored. Interpretation of life at the quarters would include the slavery and tenant periods of occupation.

- **the gin barn** — The significant resources in the gin barn — the two cotton gins and the cotton screw press — would be the focus of interpretation. Due to safety concerns, visitors would have controlled access to the main floor to see the cotton ginning and press equipment. Wayside exhibits or other suitable media would be used to help interpret cotton processing.

The following structures would be preserved and would be interpreted from the outside with no visitor access to the interior:

- the quarters (six)
- the blacksmith's shop
- the pigeonier
- the carriage house

Consistent with the concept that the physical appearance of the plantation would reflect the a circa 1960 date, late 1940s, the cotton picker shed (circa 1950s later construction) would be removed from the site following full documentation.

The stable would be adaptively used for park maintenance activities.

In addition to the site's historic structures, the associated landscapes and artifacts would be rehabilitated or preserved as appropriate and consistent with the ~~late 1940's~~ circa 1960 timeframe.

Land Protection. Park staff would work cooperatively with landowners and others to protect the historic character and traditional land uses of adjacent properties.

Phase Two

General. The park would have the option of requiring a reservation system at Magnolia as a visitor management strategy. Because this unit is small and its landscape is sensitive to change, this would be a reasonable management

TABLE 7. SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Topic	Alternative 1—Preferred Alternative	Alternative 2—Status Quo	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5
Concept	* Preserve and rehabilitate the landscapes, structures, and artifacts of the two national park units to reflect the appearance of the family-run, fully operational plantations (ca. 1948) <u>continuum of history up to about 1960</u>. Set up basic operations to manage the resources and establish a quality visitor experience. Share accounts from people who lived and worked at the plantations. * At Oakland, tell the park stories through ongoing preservation and research activities and though the professionals doing this work. As those activities lessen, bring the stories about the working plantation to life through programs, demonstrations, and exhibits. * At Magnolia, offer visitors more of a discovery experience; stories would be told mostly through a variety of media. * At both plantations, hold special events several times a year. * Become a leader in assisting the community with heritage area research, preservation, and education.	* Continue to manage units as historic areas and to conduct research and stabilize and preserve structures or other features in compliance with current laws, policies, and guidelines. * Make sure any development is temporary and reversible until an action is tied to an approved plan. * Continue to base tours and programs on available research and guidance from the park's establishing legislation.	* Focus interpretive program on the history of the plantations and the major social and economic stories of Louisiana lifeways and agriculture that they represent. Use research and historic preservation projects and knowledge gained from them to help illustrate the park's interpretive themes. Allow researchers and preservationists to explain their work to the public. * Manage the cultural landscape to reflect the continuum of history up to about 1960, when the traditional plantation system had ended. * Develop expertise in preservation methods for plantations and have park staff provide an important source of technical assistance to the community.	* Allow visitors to discover and explore the plantation sites and experience the sense of place through the preservation of the rustic character of the plantations and low-key interpretive media. * Reflect the appearance of the traditional family-run fully operational plantations (ca. 1948). * Allow minimal and unobtrusive onsite development. * Work with the heritage area and others to provide a shuttle transportation system for the Cane River/ Natchitoches area. * Play a substantial role in working with heritage area partners, primarily through cooperative agreements that would aid in conserving cultural traditions and landscapes and in developing educational programs.	* Bring the two national park units to life as working plantations. Focus interpretation on the long history of the plantations and the major social and economic stories of Louisiana plantation life. Based on research and documentation, tell personal stories of the people who worked plantation lands. Emphasize interpretive and educational programming and personal services, including educational outreach programs with the community's school system. * Provide some demonstrations of traditional lifeways and perhaps use farm animals and equipment in the demonstrations. * Manage the cultural landscape to reflect the continuum of history up to about 1960, when the traditional plantation system had ended.

Oakland – Phase One Development Management Area	Develop an entry road and parking for about 20 cars and four RVs/buses north and west of the main complex. Construct an entrance pavilion to provide visitor information, shade, a staging area for groups, and restrooms.	* Continue access and parking via the formal driveway to main house; buses and RVs could not be accommodated. * Continue to manage visitation by reservation until staffing levels and parking are adequate.	Develop an entry road and parking for about 21 cars and two RVs north of the main complex; provide bus parking offsite.	Provide parking for about 15 cars and two RVs near the doctor's house and offsite bus parking.	* Develop paved entry road and parking area for about 30 cars and six RVs/buses north of the main complex. * Construct an entrance pavilion near parking area for information, shade, a staging area for groups, and restrooms. * Build temporary maintenance facility.
Oakland – Phase One Core Plantation Management Area	* Preserve and interpret main house using historic furnishings and new exhibits. Have onsite interpreter. * Provide cooperating association sales outlet in plantation store. * Remove structure built after 1948 1960. * Develop pathway system through site; provide wayside exhibits, temporary waysides at work sites, and brochures. * Let researchers and preservationists interact with public, explain their work, and answer questions.	* Continue limited visitor services and park administrative offices in the main house; move park offices to doctor's house when it is ready. * Limit research and resource preservation and management work to current funding levels.	* Provide visitor information, cooperating association sales outlet, and restrooms in the (staffed) main house. * Present older house sections as an exhibit of Creole architecture and bousillage construction. * Develop pathway system through site; provide wayside exhibits, temporary waysides at work sites, and brochures. * Let researchers and preservationists explain their work to the public and answer questions. * Focus community outreach on educational programs and technical assistance related to preservation methods. * Lease southwest field for agricultural use.	* Provide visitor information and restrooms and small cooperating association sales outlet at the plantation store. * Possibly use reservation system. * Return many of the historic furnishings and provide new exhibits at the main house; staff the house with at least one interpreter. * Develop pathway system through site; use tapes, brochures, and wayside exhibits to facilitate visitor exploration and ensure solitude. * Provide limited interpretive programs. * Remove structures built after 1948.	* Provide cooperating association sales outlet, artifact display, and some interpretation at plantation store. * Rehab cook's cabin to provide additional visitor information services. * Return many of the historic furnishings and provide new exhibits at the main house and provide interpretive tours. * Develop extensive paved trail system. * Provide diverse onsite staffed programs and demonstrations — e.g., of crop planting and harvesting. * Keep some farm animals onsite for interpretation.
Oakland – Phase One Administrative Adaptive Use Management Area	* Locate park offices in doctor's house. * Provide limited adaptive use of seed house for maintenance workspaces. Provide separate access road and staff parking.	Locate park offices in doctor's house.	Same as alternative 1.	Same as alternative 1.	* Locate park offices in doctor's house. * Provide limited adaptive use of seed house as educational meeting area for groups. Provide separate access road and staff parking.

Oakland – Phase Two Land Protection	Acquire remaining 144 acres of Oakland unit (possibly in phases) to protect resources, including the black cemetery, wetlands, and agricultural landscape features.	No phasing in this alternative. Continue management as described in phase 1.	Complete land protection plan to explore whether other acquisition or protection strategies would be needed for nonfederal lands within the boundary.	Acquire the remaining 144 acres within the authorized boundary and manage it through grazing leases or similar arrangements.	Acquire the remaining 144 acres within the authorized boundary to protect resources. Manage it for demonstrating plantation agricultural activities and interpreting natural and cultural resources.
Magnolia – Phase One Development Management Area	Manage visitation by reservation until staffing levels and parking are adequate. Provide parking for 10 cars and two RVs/buses, with additional offsite bus parking.	Manage visitation by reservation until staffing levels and parking are adequate. Provide temporary gravel parking area south of the store for about 10 cars and one bus/RV.	Provide parking for about 11 cars and two RVs and offsite bus parking.	* Manage visitation by reservation system until shuttle is operating (phase two). * Provide parking for about 10 cars and two RVs near the store and offsite bus parking; reduce when shuttle is operating.	Develop larger parking area in the field west of the quarters area for about 20 cars and three buses/RVs.
Magnolia – Phase One Core Plantation Management Area	* Provide visitor information and restrooms at plantation store. * Remove cotton picker shed (post-1948 1960 structure). * Develop pathway system throughout unit. * Use waysides and other interpretive media to help visitors discover the unit; provide limited tours.	* Provide visitor information and restrooms in plantation store, with all adaptations being reversible. * Limit research and resource preservation and management work to current funding levels.	* Provide visitor information at the gin barn and the plantation store, both staffed. * Develop pathway system throughout unit. * In addition to researchers and preservationists interacting with public, provide waysides and temporary displays to facilitate understanding.	* Provide visitor information and restrooms at the plantation store. * Provide pathway system through site. * Use exhibits, taped tours, and brochures to facilitate visitor exploration and ensure solitude; provide interpretive programs on a limited basis.	* Adapt overseer's house for visitor information and restrooms. * Furnish and interpret the plantation store using plantation store artifacts. * Develop a paved trail system. * Provide onsite staffed programs and demonstrations — e.g., of cotton processing, including cotton gin and press operations.
Magnolia – Phase One Land Protection	Work cooperatively with landowners and others to protect the historic character and traditional land uses of adjacent properties.	Same as alternative 1.	Same as alternative 1.	Same as alternative 1.	Same as alternative 1.
Magnolia – Phase Two General	Require a reservation system if determined necessary to protect resources.	Continue management as described in phase 1.	Provide shuttle from Oakland visitor center to Magnolia, with onboard interpretive services.	* Consider need to continue using a reservation system. * Reduce size of parking area when shuttle is operating.	Continue management as described in phase 1.

TABLE 9. SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT IMPACTS FOR EACH ALTERNATIVE

This table does not contain the discussions of irreversible and ir retrievable commitment of resources, relationship between short-term uses and long-term productivity, energy requirements and conservation potential, and unavoidable adverse impacts; please refer to the narrative text for these topics.

Impact Topic	Alternative 1 – Preferred Alternative	Alternative 2 – Status Quo	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5
Cultural Resources	* Disturbance of about 3 to 4.5 acres could damage unknown archeological resources. * About 17 structures would be adaptively used, which would have a long-term beneficial effect on these resources. * Circa 1948 1960 landscape treatments would result in removal, relocation, and alteration of some structures and other features, thus causing minor to moderate changes to the existing landscape. <u>fewer changes to the current appearance of the plantations compared to the 1948 treatments, especially at Oakland Plantation.</u> * Preservation and education partnerships would potentially have a long-term moderate to major impact on helping preserve and conserve cultural resources and traditions in the region. * New development in the national park units would be moderate in scale and impact. Impacts on the cultural landscape would be partially mitigated by sensitive design of facilities and augmenting vegetative screening. The impacts of offsite development cannot be evaluated at this time.	* Disturbance of less than 1 acre could damage unknown archeological resources. * The ongoing effort to provide emergency stabilization and some rehabilitation of structures at Magnolia and Oakland is having a long-term positive impact on protecting park resources. Research and resource documentation is improving the park's ability to make informed management decisions. * Educational and interpretive programs, although limited, would benefit cultural resource protection in the parish. * The lack of new construction of major park facilities at Oakland would provide short-term protection of the site's cultural landscape. However, over the long-term there is potential for significant damage or loss of the live oak allée if frequent visitor use of the driveway continues. The construction of the relatively small parking area at Magnolia would have a minor to moderate long-term impact on the cultural landscape there.	* Disturbance of about 3.5 to 4 acres could damage unknown archeological resources. * About 16 structures would be adaptively used, which would have a beneficial effect on these resources. * Circa 1960 landscape treatments would result in fewer changes to the current appearance of the plantations compared to the 1948 treatments. * The park's development of expertise in Creole architecture preservation would have a long-term minor to moderate positive impact on helping preserve and conserve cultural resources and traditions in the region. * New onsite development would have long-term minor to moderate negative impacts on the cultural landscape at the park units. Impacts would be partially mitigated by landscape documentation, sensitive design, vegetative screening, and the implementation of a park shuttle. The impacts of offsite development cannot be evaluated at this time.	* Disturbance of up to 2.5 acres could damage unknown archeological resources. * About 16 structures would be adaptively used, which would have a beneficial effect on these resources. * Circa 1948 landscape treatments would result in removal, relocation, and alteration of some structures and other features, thus causing minor to moderate changes to the existing landscape. * Preservation and education partnerships would potentially have a long-term moderate to major impact on helping preserve and conserve cultural resources and traditions in the region. * New onsite development would have long-term minor to moderate negative impacts on the cultural landscapes. Impacts would be partially mitigated by further landscape documentation, sensitive facility design, vegetative screening, and implementation of a regional shuttle system. * The impacts of offsite development cannot be evaluated at this time.	* Disturbance of about 4.5 to 6.5 acres could damage unknown archeological resources. * More than 24 structures would be adaptively used, which would have a beneficial effect on these resources. There would be a higher damage risk to structures due to the use of farm animals. * Circa 1960 landscape treatments would result in fewer changes to the current appearance of the plantations compared to the 1948 treatments. * Limited partnerships would result in a minor to moderate negative impact on regional preservation efforts. * New development would have a long-term moderate negative impact on the cultural landscape of Oakland Plantation, and a moderate to major impact at Magnolia. Impacts at Oakland would be partially mitigated by sensitive facility design and vegetative screening. Due to Magnolia's small size and limited locations for development, little mitigation could be done. The impacts of offsite development cannot be evaluated at this time.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cane River Creole National Historical Park consists of two sites, Magnolia Plantation and Oakland Plantation. The two units represent the remnants of two large plantations that contributed greatly to the social, economic, and cultural development of the Cane River region. Both these plantations retain numerous significant historic resources that reflect the evolution of plantation agriculture along the Cane River. The following section provides historical overviews for the region and both plantations, descriptions of the sites' resource types and summaries of recent research, and inventories of the specific extant resources.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Twelve thousand years ago, Paleo-Indians hunted and lived in what is now Louisiana. The Archaic stage (8000 to 700 B.C.) represented the adaptation that humans made to environmental changes in the wake of global warming and glacial retreat. A broad-based economy based on gathering, fishing, and small-game hunting developed. The Archaic shift to efficient exploitation of local resources may represent a "settling in" rather than a dramatic departure from previous subsistence practices. A significant late Archaic development (2000 to 700 B.C.) is the Poverty Point culture, a period of trade and more complex cultural development. This was followed by a succession of developments known as the Tchefunte, Marksville, and Troyville-Coles Creek cultures (500 B.C. to A.D. 1100) which together represented increasingly advanced societies and cultures. Between A.D. 1000 and A.D. 800, the Caddo culture appeared, an apparent offshoot of the Coles Creek culture. A number of Caddo settlement and related sites have been found in the Natchitoches Parish area. These sites reveal a culture that developed around farming, gathering, hunting, and fishing. By about A.D. 1450, the Louisiana Caddoan culture had divided into several speaking groups (Adaes, Doughton, Natchitoches, Ouachita, and Yatasi). These were

the groups present at the time of European contact.

On September 14, 1712, King Louis XIV of France officially granted Antoine Crozat, Marquis de Chatel, exclusive trading and governing rights in Louisiana for 15 years. Under the terms of the royal charter, the French government agreed to pay a portion of the colonial expenditures for nine years. Crozat planned to exploit more fully the agricultural and commercial potential of the colony. In 1713 he sent agents to revitalize trade with the Indians and to administer colonial affairs more efficiently. One of the agents dispatched was the new governor, Antoine de la Mothe, Cadillac. Cadillac requested that Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, a leader of the an earlier French expedition to the Red River valley, head an overland expedition to Mexico to try to establish trade with the Spanish (Reed 1934, pg. 4). Near the Natchitoches Indian village, St. Denis had two huts built to store some of his merchandise and to house the few men he left as guards. It is to this action, in 1714, that the community of Natchitoches dates its origin (Giraud 1974, pg. 48). While St. Denis was in Mexico, in 1716, Cadillac sent "a sergeant (Sieur du Tisne) and six soldiers to take possession of the island of the Natchitoches" and to build a fort to prevent the Spanish from settling there (Harpe 1771, pg. 71; Rowland and Sanders 1932, pg. 515; Charlevoix 1977, pg. 31; Bridges and DeVille 1967, pg. 241). Later that year, Spanish officials reported that "the French had erected a good fort" (Morfi 1935, pg. 187). This post was the first permanent settlement in the present state of Louisiana (New Orleans was established in 1718). In 1721, St. Denis was appointed commandant of Fort St. Jean Baptiste (Rowland and Sanders 1929, pg. 265; 1932, pg. 315). For many years, under his leadership, return to that area to establish a French settlement. In 1714 St. Denis began construction of Fort St. Jean Baptiste. This post was the first permanent settlement in the present state of Louisiana (New Orleans was established in 1718). The city

of Natchitoches began as a settlement around this modest outpost. For many years the fort served as an important strategic and trade center on the Red River.

St. Denis combined courage and tact with his knowledge of the Indian frontier and became a key figure in colonial Louisiana's affairs. During his tenure, Cadillac's administration succeeded in attracting new settlers to the colony. The growing colony in turn required a better-defined land grant system. In 1716 the king adopted a series of colonial land regulations, which stipulated that a land grant had to be cleared within two years or else revert back to the crown. In addition, the land was to be two-thirds cleared before the original grantee could sell it.

currently unknown archeological resources. If archeological resources were found, mitigating measures would be undertaken (see "Impacts Common to All Alternatives" for a description of mitigating measures).

Park development at Oakland, particularly the access road, parking area, entrance pavilion, outdoor maintenance storage, and possibly a new maintenance facility (phase two) would have a moderate long-term impact on the cultural landscape. At Oakland, the profile of the road and parking area would be relatively low and unobtrusive when observed from the core historic management area. Surfacing treatment (at both units) would be unpaved to help reduce pavement heat and allow surfaces to blend more easily into the landscape. The use of the road and parking areas would result in the movement of cars and busses across the northwestern section of the site and would be visible on the landscape.

If a maintenance facility were constructed onsite at Oakland, the result would be a new sizable structure being introduced into the cultural landscape. Associated with this would be the visual impact of outdoor storage of materials. The vegetation patterns at Oakland would help to screen much of this activity from the core historic management area. This vegetative screening could be augmented to further mitigate the visual impacts of vehicles, outdoor storage, and a maintenance facility.

The entrance pavilion's location somewhere between the parking area and the current site of the cotton picker shed would introduce a new structure into the cultural landscape, relatively close to the core cluster of historic plantation structures. While the profile of the structure would be relatively open, the structure would not be visually screened from the core historic area, ~~especially with the removal of the two sheds~~ and would visually become linked to the core cluster of plantation structures.

Construction of the relatively small parking area at Magnolia would have a minor to moderate impact on the cultural landscape due

to its proximity to the core cluster of outbuildings within the relatively small 19-acre setting of Magnolia Plantation.

Further evaluation of development would be necessary when design plans were developed. The cultural landscapes for both national park units would be further documented, and treatment would be developed for the preservation of these landscapes. Based on this cultural landscape documentation, development would be designed to minimize impacts on all significant resources.

Cultural landscape treatments would be based on the decision in this alternative to have the landscape reflect the appearance of the plantations circa 1948-1960. (This approach would have to be substantiated by the recommendations of the cultural landscape report.) ~~This would result in the removal of some structures; the relocation of several outbuildings and fencerows; alterations to some structures; particularly the main house at Oakland; and the replacement of some exterior materials on structures, such as roofing and siding materials. These actions would be taken only after following appropriate compliance procedures. More research is necessary to fully know the extent of these changes. However, this approach would result in some minor to moderate changes to the existing landscape and would likely cost more to implement than alternatives 2, 3, and 5 due to costs of structure relocation and alteration. This would result in fewer changes to the current layout or general appearance of plantation structures and other features. Contemporary materials, (post-1948) were used to clad some buildings to prolong their use as an alternative to the expense of repairing them. Although these materials fit within the 1960 timeframe, they were never meant to be long-term solutions and would be removed and the base structure repaired. With a 1960 treatment date, cladding like what was used just before the application of the contemporary materials would be applied to preserve the integrity of the scene. These actions would be taken only after following appropriate compliance procedures.~~

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APPENDIX: AGENCY/ORGANIZATION COMMENT LETTERS



Cane River National Heritage Area

P.O. Box 1201

Natchitoches, LA 71458

Telephone: 318-356-5555

Fax: 318-356-8222

E-mail: CARI_Heritage_Area@nps.gov

Received DSC-PDS

AUG 14 2000

August 7, 2000

Ms. Ann Van Huizen
NPS-DSC-PDS
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
Lakewood, CO 80228

Dear Ms. Van Huizen:

This letter is written in support of the National Park Service's preferred alternative 1 for management of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park.

We agree that emphasis should be placed on preserving and rehabilitating the landscapes, structures, and artifacts of the two park units so that a quality onsite visitor experience can be provided. We also approve of strong partnerships between the park and the community. And we eagerly anticipate the presentation of the history of area plantations and research-based as well as well-documented stories of the people who lived and worked on them.

Parking areas and a visitor center are elements that are obviously needed to facilitate the visitor experience of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, and we look forward to cooperating with the Park on these projects for the benefit of the entire Cane River National Heritage Area.

Thank you for the careful and comprehensive preparation of the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Cane River Creole National Historical Park. We appreciate your dedicated efforts on this project.

We as co-chairmen represent the full Commission with this endorsement.

Sincerely,

Saidee W. Newell, Co-chair
Cane River National Heritage Area Commission.

Robert B. DeBlieux, Co-chair
Cane River National Heritage Area Commission



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation Service

3737 Government Street
Alexandria, Louisiana
71302

August 1, 2000

Cane River Creole
National Historical Park

AUG 02 2000

RECEIVED

Ms. Laura Soulliere, Superintendent
United States Department of the Interior
Cane River Creole National Historical Park
4386 Highway 494
Natchez, Louisiana 71456

Dear Ms. Soulliere:

Re: Cane River Creole National Historical Park

Thank you for providing our agency with the opportunity to respond to your letter dated June 12, 2000, wherein you requested views and comments on the above project.

It does not appear that this project will impact any of our work in the vicinity. Further, we do not believe that this project will have an adverse effect on the surrounding environment when completed if appropriate erosion control measures are taken during construction.

Should you have questions regarding the above comments, please feel free to contact Glenn Austin, District Conservationist, at the Natchitoches Field Office at (318) 357-8366, ext. 3.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. J. Giering III", with a stylized flourish at the end.

E. J. Giering III, P.E.
Assistant State Conservationist/Engineering

cc: Glenn Austin, District Conservationist, Natchitoches, LA



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

August 15, 2000

Ms. Laura Soulliere
Superintendent
Cane River Creole National Historical Park
4386 Highway 494
Natchez, LA 71456

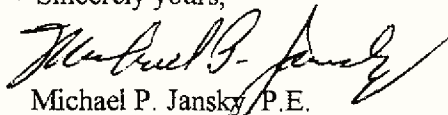
Dear Ms. Soulliere:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has completed its review of the National Park Service Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Louisiana.

The EPA rates your DEIS as "LO," i.e., EPA has "Lack of Objections" to the lead agency's preferred alternative. Our classification will be published in the Federal Register according to our responsibility under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, to inform the public of our views on proposed Federal actions.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the DEIS. We request that you send our office one copy of the Final EIS at the same time that it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, (2251A), EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20044.

Sincerely yours,


Michael P. Jansky, P.E.
Regional Environmental Review
Coordinator

Cane River Creole
National Historical Park

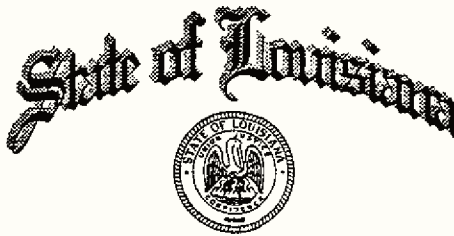
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Internet Address (URL) • <http://www.epa.gov>

Recycled/Recyclable • Printed with Vegetable Oil Based Inks on Recycled Paper (Minimum 25% Postconsumer)

M.J. "MIKE" FOSTER, JR.
GOVERNOR



Cane River Creole
National Historical Park

JUL 03 2000

RECEIVED
JACK C. CALDWELL
SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

June 30, 2000

Ms. Laura Soullière, Superintendent
Cane River Creole National Historical Park
4386 Highway 494
Natchez, LA 71456

RE: **C000294**, Coastal Zone Consistency
National Park Service
Direct Federal Action
General management plan and EIS for Cane River Creole National
Historical Park
Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana

Dear Ms. Soullière:

The above referenced project has been reviewed for consistency with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program in accordance with Section 307 (c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended. It has been determined that the captioned project falls outside the Coastal Zone and has no significant effects on the Coastal Zone. The project, therefore, requires no formal consistency review and this Department has no objection.

It should be noted that another project in the same area may be deemed to impact the Coastal Zone and require consistency review. For this reason we request that your agency continue to submit applications to this Department for any other projects in the area. If you have any questions concerning this determination please contact Chris Seifert of the Consistency Section at (225)342-7943.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Terry W. Howey".

Terry W. Howey
Administrator

TWH/JDH/cws

cc: Fred Dunham, LDWF



CATHERINE SABINEAUX BLAND
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PHILLIP J. JONES
SECRETARY
GERRI HODDY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

September 7, 2000

Ms. Laura Soullière, Superintendent
Cane River Creole National Historical Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
4386 Highway 494
Natchez, Louisiana 71456

Re: Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Statement
Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Natchitoches Parish, LA

Dear Ms. Soullière:

We received your June 8, 2000 letter regarding the above-referenced report on June 12, 2000. Our staff has reviewed the report and has the following general comments regarding management of the historical park.

Our office remains committed to the concept of interpreting these properties for the benefit of the public; the overall historic character of the community, however, remains equally important. Thus, we do not feel that any benefits should be outweighed by costs to this historic character. Thus, we believe that uses which reduce impacts to the historic fabric of the two plantation properties best promote the overall goal of preserving these resources. In our view, important factors to consider include: sensitive design and siting of new construction; reduction of vehicular traffic; and elimination of demolition. Furthermore, accepting 1948 as a "cut-off" date for interpretation may be short-sighted with regard to demolitions.

We continue to recommend strict adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards when executing rehabilitation projects. As you are aware, the Magnolia and Oakland Plantations represent very rare and unique cultural resources which must be protected.

Regarding archaeological resources, we feel that the plan recognizes the potential for impacts to these resources and defines the steps taken to consider such resources during implementation. Consequently, we have no objection to the implementation of any of the proposed alternatives

Ms. Laura Soullière
September 7, 2000
Page 2

from this standpoint as these steps were developed through consultation with the Division of Archaeology and the advice of the NPS Regional Archaeologists at the Southeastern Archaeological Center.

We appreciate your continued efforts to involve our office early in the planning of your undertakings. If you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth Moore in the Division of Historic Preservation.

Sincerely,


Gerri Hobdy
State Historic Preservation Officer

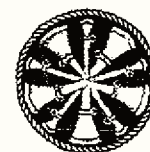
GH/EAM/eam



Wayne McCullen
Mayor

CITY OF NATCHITOCHES
FIRE DEPARTMENT

PREVENTION • SUPPRESSION • RESCUE • E.M.S.



Bob Hebert
Fire Chief

Cane River Creole
National Historical Park

JUN 26 2000

RECEIVED

June 23, 2000

Laura Soulliere
Superintendent
Cane River Creole
National Historical Park
4386 Highway 494
Natchez, LA 71456

Dear Ms. Soulliere:

The General Management Plan Draft seems to be a good plan for the future. However, I saw nothing that addresses the problem of fire protection in any of the historic structures. As you know in the rural areas, water systems and fire protection are not always adequate. With that in mind, has any thought been given to on site fire protection for these structures?

I was unable to attend the meetings to discuss the plan. Perhaps fire protection was discussed in one of these. I hope so, because once these structures burn, they are gone forever. The best way to preserve them is to protect them.

Sincerely,

Bob Hebert, Chief
Natchitoches Fire Department

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION COMMENT LETTERS

781 Front Street
Natchitoches, Louisiana 71457
Phone 318-352-8072
1-800-259-1714
Fax 318-352-2415
E-mail: est1714@cp-tel.net



August 3, 2000

National Park Service
Denver Service Center
Van Huizen DSC/RPG
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-9901

Received DSC-PDS

AUG 18 2000

RE: Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Draft General Management Plan & Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Sirs,

The Board of Commissioners of the Natchitoches Convention & Visitors Bureau has reviewed the proposed alternatives for the Draft Management Plan for Cane River Creole National Historical Park. This board unanimously agrees with the preferred alternative 1 with the following modifications:

Alternative 1: Oakland Actions (phase 2):
We encourage the construction of a maintenance facility offsite.

Alternative 1: Magnolia Actions (phase 1 & 2):
Eliminate reservation system and open on a limited daily basis with scheduled tours.

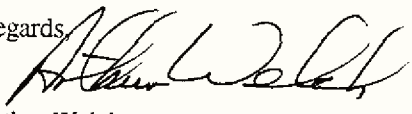
Alternative 3: Magnolia Actions (phase 1):
Limited parking for a few cars. No buses.
Visitor information in the plantation store

Alternative 4: Offsite Actions (phase 2):
Major staging area for regional shuttle system to be incorporated with joint regional visitor center.

Alternative 5: Concept
To provide seasonal interpretive programs that would include demonstrations with farm animals and equipment.

Other ideas not presented in the alternative would be "Interpretive Costumed Programs" presented on a regular basis.

Regards,


Arthur Welch
Chairman
Natchitoches Convention & Visitors Bureau

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECORD OF DECISION
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN
ON
Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Louisiana

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has prepared this Record of Decision on the *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (FGMP/EIS) for the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Louisiana. This Record of Decision is a statement of the decision made, the background of the project, other alternatives considered, the basis for the decision, the environmentally preferable alternative, measures to minimize environmental harm, and public involvement in the decision making process.

DECISION (SELECTED ACTION)

The National Park Service will implement Alternative 1, the preferred alternative, as described in the *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*.

Cane River Creole National Historical Park will preserve and rehabilitate the cultural landscapes, historic structures, and artifacts of the two national park units, Oakland and Magnolia Plantations, to reflect the continuum of history up to about 1960. This will result in few changes to the current configuration of plantation structures or the general appearance of the landscape.

The long history of the plantations and the major cultural, social, and economic stories of Louisiana plantation lifeways and agriculture that they represent will be told (interpreted) to the public. Based on research and documentation, accounts of the lives and lifestyles of the people who lived and worked at the plantations will be shared through media and programs. The presentation of these stories will differ at the two units. Initially at Oakland, the park's stories would be told through ongoing research and preservation activities, and researchers and preservationists will interface with the public and help interpret work underway. As these activities lessen, the stories will be brought to life by providing a very active visitor experience that will include not just exhibits, but also interpreter-led programs and demonstrations. At Magnolia visitors will have a more contemplative discovery experience of the site's landscape and structures primarily through the use of a variety of media. Onsite interpretation of ongoing research or preservation projects would occur but phase out as work was completed. The intent of this low-key interpretive approach at Magnolia will be to provide a quality visitor experience while trying to limit the amount of impact on this small site. A reservation system could be used to manage future visitation levels at Magnolia if necessary. Special interpretive events and programs will occur at both sites several times a year.

The park will provide access, parking, trails, and basic visitor services at each unit. Development

at Oakland Plantation will include an access road and parking area for cars and buses. Visitors will be able to explore the site using a handicap-accessible trail system. An outdoor pavilion-style shelter will be constructed and serve as an entry portal for that site, providing visitor information and restrooms. Eventually a park maintenance facility will be constructed either offsite near Oakland or, if an offsite location cannot be found or is infeasible, then a facility will be constructed onsite in the development management area. Development at Magnolia Plantation will include parking for cars and buses, with the goal of limiting bus parking onsite and establishing additional offsite bus parking near Magnolia. A handicap-accessible trail system will be developed and will link the major resources of the site.

The park's historic features will be interpreted, with several structures being adapted either to provide visitors interior access and services or to accommodate park management needs. At Oakland Plantation, the main plantation house will be furnished, staffed, and interpreted. The plantation store will include a cooperating association sales outlet and interpretive exhibits. Visitors will also be able to access the interior of the mule barn, overseer's house, and quarters. Park offices will be located in the doctor's house and the seed house will be adapted initially for maintenance activities, to be converted later to educational space for groups. At Magnolia, the plantation store will be staffed and provide visitor information and restrooms. Controlled access to the gin barn's main floor will be provided. The interiors of two of the quarters will be restored for visitor access and interpretation and visitors will also have access to the interior of the overseer's house/slave hospital.

The National Park Service will work in partnership with the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission and others to develop a joint regional visitor center and headquarters in the Natchitoches/Cane River area, outside of the downtown Natchitoches historic landmark district. This facility will be important for orienting the public to the area's resources, especially those of the park, heritage area, and historic district. Also, the visitor center will provide a variety of interpretive and educational opportunities by which visitors will gain a greater appreciation for and understanding about the park's history and relationship to the themes and topics of the broader Cane River heritage area. And in partnership with local organizations and institutions, additional programs, seminars, and events could be developed in the community offering the public further opportunities to learn about and discuss topics on local culture and heritage. Also, park managers will pursue the possibility of developing a joint curatorial facility, possibly as part of the joint visitor center complex.

When the National Park Service evaluates property for acquisition for offsite park activities (outside the boundary authorized by Congress), it will consider a variety of concerns and criteria prior to acquisition. Some of these include (1) safe and legal access to the site; (2) adequate size to accommodate site activities; (3) absence of hazardous materials; (4) location outside of the 100-year floodplain; (5) minimal potential impact on sensitive natural and cultural resources; and (6) cost-effective development and occupation conditions. This last item depends on the resource and the types of use being considered. Concerns include condition of existing infrastructure; cost of utilities; and construction limitations, such as soil and drainage conditions.

On a regional level, the park will be a leader in developing partnerships with the community to assist in Cane River area research and technical assistance, particularly in cultural resource preservation and heritage education. Most partnership arrangements will be developed with local agencies and organizations through cooperative agreements. Included in this effort will be a partnership with other heritage area sites and partners to develop and maintain a quality pool of volunteers who would be available to work at a variety of sites.

Additional future studies and plans will be needed to implement the broad guidance of the general management plan. These studies include a comprehensive interpretive plan, an exhibit plan and design, a historic furnishings report, a resource management plan, cultural landscape reports, various ethnographic reports, cultural affiliation and lineal descent studies, a land protection plan, a boundary study, as well as further archeological and historical research related to various resources and topics.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The National Park Service considered four other alternatives in addition to Alternative 1, the selected action. They are the following:

Alternative 2, the status quo or no action alternative, represents the current management direction for the park and serves as a basis for comparing the other alternatives. Staffing and funding levels would remain at or near current levels. Visitor services would remain limited and current laws, policies, and guidelines would guide resource management actions. Any development that occurred that is not tied to an approved plan would be designed to be temporary and reversible.

In **Alternative 3** the ongoing research and preservation work would be used to tell the stories of the park and reflect its continuum of appearance up to circa 1960. Researchers and preservationists would help tell visitors about the work underway. A new visitor center at Oakland would provide in-depth interpretive services and displays about the park units. A park shuttle would provide alternative transportation to help reduce vehicular traffic to Magnolia Plantation.

Alternative 4's management emphasis would be to allow visitors to discover and quietly explore the plantation sites through the preservation of the units' rustic character and the use of a variety of media. To support this, onsite development would be minimal. The park staff would develop strong partnerships with the community, including the development of a regional shuttle system and an offsite joint regional visitor center.

In **Alternative 5**, the park units would come to life as working plantations through substantial investment in interpretive and educational programs and personal services, including educational outreach. A relatively high level of new onsite development would be provided to accommodate higher visitation levels and facility maintenance needs. Basic visitor information for the region would be provided in partnership at a small offsite facility.

BASIS FOR DECISION

The selected action best balances the statutory mission of the National Park Service to provide long term resource preservation while allowing for appropriate levels of visitor use and appropriate means of visitor enjoyment. It also is the most responsive to the park's legislated purposes of providing technical assistance to a broad range of public and private entities and assisting in the preservation and interpretation of, and education concerning, the Cane River region's history and culture.

The selected action, alternative 1, accomplishes a high level of park resource protection by

ensuring that most major facility development is located offsite. In contrast, alternatives 3 and 5 would have required the construction of substantial new facility complexes at Oakland Plantation. Although alternative 4 would have had the least onsite facility development, the circa 1948 landscape treatment would have resulted in the removal, relocation, and alteration of several plantation structures and other cultural landscape features. By preserving the landscape of circa 1960, the selected action substantially limits the amount of disturbance to cultural resources. Also, the acquisition of the remaining acreage within the boundary would help ensure long-term protection of plantation landscapes and resources currently not part of the park.

In alternative 4, the discovery and quiet exploration experience at both sites would have provided visitors with a limited range of visitor opportunities. The selected action achieves a much broader range by providing many varied interpretive and educational opportunities at the Oakland unit. At Magnolia, while the emphasis is on discovery and exploration, special events would be held there several times a year. By limiting the range of interpretive activities at Magnolia, the selected action is responsive to the site's size limitations and resource sensitivity. In contrast, alternative 5 would have provided a high level of interpretive and educational activities at both sites that would over the long term have turned the park into more of a theme attraction that would have resulted in substantial resource stress, particularly at Magnolia Plantation.

Public comments on alternative 4 revealed support for a regional shuttle system between historic attractions in the Cane River region. Although this would provide a valuable service to the public, this public transportation option was not included in the selected action because of cost considerations. However, it remains a potential option that could be accomplished through private enterprise or a joint public-private partnership.

The selected action's commitment to a joint regional visitor center helps ensure that the park will be a long-term partner with the heritage area and others in helping to interpret and educate the public about the culture and heritage of the Cane River region. This type of facility will offer a wider range of visitor services compared to the visitor contact station identified in alternative 5. By being located outside of the park and closer to the City of Natchitoches, the visitor center will be more accessible to a broader cross-section of the visiting public. The selected action also commits to a wider spectrum of partnership assistance, from park-based preservation training opportunities to offsite cooperative agreements with others to achieve heritage education and preservation outreach goals. Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 do not extend as full a commitment to these efforts and focus more on partnership efforts that primarily support and benefit onsite park programs and projects.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The National Park Service was directed by Congress in 1980 to undertake a study of the Cane River area. Completed in 1993, this *Special Resource Study/Environmental Assessment of Cane River, Louisiana*, evaluated the resources and opportunities of this region, using the National Park Service's new area criteria for national significance, suitability and feasibility. The resources that met the criteria for potential establishment as units of the national park system were Oakland Plantation and the Magnolia Plantation quarters complex and outbuildings. These findings led Congress to pass Public Law 103-449 on November 2, 1994 creating Cane River Creole National Historical Park. This law also created the Cane River National Heritage Area, within which the park is located, and the 19-member Cane River National Heritage Area Commission. The purposes of this establishing legislation are to (1) recognize the importance of Cane River Creole

culture as a nationally significant element of the cultural heritage of the United States; (2) establish the park to serve as a focus of interpretive and educational programs on the history of the area and to assist in the preservation of certain historic sites along the Cane River; and (3) establish the heritage area and commission undertaken in partnership with the state, city of Natchitoches, local communities, preservation organizations, and private landowners.

This act also required that the National Park Service prepare a General Management Plan for the park in consultation with the Commission. The Commission, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior from representatives of the Cane River region, participated in the planning effort from its initiation. Commission members participated in planning meetings and workshops and provided review of planning documents. An Environmental Impact Statement was prepared for the GMP as required by National Park Service policy and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, which requires the evaluation of potential impacts resulting from federal actions or lands involving federal jurisdiction.

This abbreviated *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, in combination with the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, is a programmatic statement. The proposed action and alternatives each consist of a basic management framework for future decision making. Consequently, the statement presents an overview of potential impacts relating to the proposed program for each alternative. In the future, implementation of specific actions included in the approved final plan would require the preparation of more detailed environmental assessments. This Record of Decision is the last necessary action under NEPA regulations and completes the general management planning process for Cane River Creole National Historical Park.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

Environmentally preferable is defined as "the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act's Section 101. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources" (Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations, 1981).

Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act states that "...it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to ... (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; (2) assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity, and variety of individual choice; (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources."

Based on the national environmental policy goals stated above, the environmentally preferable alternative is alternative 1, the selected action. Alternative 1 best meets the full range of national goals. The selected action preserves important aspects of our historic and cultural heritage by committing to land acquisition, research, and preservation actions needed for the long-term

protection of the Oakland and Magnolia park units, which are national historic landmarks. Preserving the park landscapes to a circa 1960 period will help insure the broadest level of protection to park landscapes, structures, and artifacts compared to the alternatives that proposed a circa 1948 date. Through a committed partnership with the Cane River National Heritage Area and others, the park will contribute to research about, and preservation of, many heritage resources in the Cane River region, including resources in the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District and other historic landmarks in the heritage area.

The selected action attains the widest range of neutral and beneficial uses of the environment without degradation by limiting new onsite development, adaptively using several of the existing park structures, and providing a range of visitor opportunities appropriate to the resource limitations of each unit.

The selected action provides an environment that supports diversity by committing to continued research, interpretation, and education about the diverse cultures and traditions that contribute to the rich heritage of the Cane River region. The visiting public will be offered a variety of choices in how they learn about and experience the park and region through the services of a regional visitor center, and the many different interpretive media, programs, demonstrations and special events offered by the park.

Further, the selected action achieves a balance between human population and resource uses by providing a balance between programming and development at the park units to ensure the public has adequate access to park resources while ensuring that use levels will not exceed the resource limitations of each site. The activities of the park, including the joint visitor facility and other partnership commitments, will enhance tourism in the region and contribute to the regional economy, thereby helping to contribute in general to improvement in regional amenities and the standard of living.

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM

All practicable measures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts that could result from the implementation of the selected action have been identified and incorporated in the selected action. These measures are presented in the FGMP/EIS. However, due to the programmatic nature of the general management plan, specific implementation projects will be reviewed as necessary for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations prior to project clearance and implementation. Specific measures to minimize environmental harm will be included in future planning actions needed to implement the FGMP/EIS. These plans include archeological surveys, hazardous substance surveys, a resource management plan, cultural landscape reports, historic furnishings reports, a land protection plan, boundary study, as well as development concept plans and schematic design documents for a regional visitor center and headquarters facility, a curatorial facility, and a park maintenance facility.

The following measures will be implemented by Cane River Creole National Historical Park to avoid or minimize environmental harm as a result of implementing the selected action, or to enhance protection of resources.

- Cane River Creole National Historical Park will engage in additional study, data collection, and monitoring, especially of archeological and ethnographic resources, historic structures

and furnishings, cultural landscapes, and visitor uses to provide the knowledge base needed to make informed decisions for the long-term protection and preservation of park resources.

- The park will provide appropriate architectural treatment and use of park historic structures. Treatments will conform to the *Secretary of Interior's Standards*. Should the National Park Service acquire any additional resources as part of this plan's implementation, these resources will be surveyed to determine the nature and extent of hazardous materials contamination, if any.
- Short and long-term soil disturbance and vegetation loss from construction activities, including parking areas, pull-offs, walkways, utility lines, public facilities, and landscape restoration, will be minimized through appropriate erosion control and revegetation.
- The park will work collaboratively with the management entity for the Cane River National Heritage Area to help encourage and fund research, education, and preservation projects by state and local agencies, organizations, and private property owners. Grant criteria for preservation projects would include adherence to the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

CONSULTATION UNDER SECTION 106 OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT

The National Park Service has consulted with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer throughout the general management planning process. The SHPO reviewed and commented on the *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* and expressed several concerns that the NPS responded to in the *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. The selected action responds to stated concerns in the following ways. The selected action will preserve the park's cultural landscape using a circa 1960 "cut-off" date rather than a 1948 date, thereby eliminating the potential demolition, relocation, and alteration of several plantation structures and other cultural landscape features that would have been required using the 1948 date. Vehicular traffic will be separated from the core historic management areas of both plantation sites. At Magnolia, limited car and bus parking will be provided, and offsite bus parking will be developed to reduce the amount of development at Magnolia and limit the noise, exhaust, and visual intrusions. The management option remains to limit visitation to Magnolia using a reservation system. Further efforts to reduce vehicles to these sites will be through partnership efforts with the heritage area to develop a shuttle system. In terms of sensitively designing and siting new construction, the park will continue consultation with the SHPO as designs are developed. Also, the park will continue to strictly adhere to *The Secretary of Interior's Standards* when executing rehabilitation projects. As the park proceeds with the implementation of the general management plan, it will continue section 106 consultation as appropriate.

FINDINGS ON IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES AND VALUES

The National Park Service has determined that implementation of Alternative 1 of the *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* will not constitute an impairment to Cane River Creole National Historical Park's resources and values. This conclusion is based on

an analysis of the environmental impacts, the public comments received, and the professional judgement of the decision-maker guided by the direction in *National Park Service Management Policies 2001*. Although the plan has some adverse impacts, in all cases these are the result of actions taken to make the park accessible to the public or to preserve other resources and values. Overall, the selected action results in major benefits to park resources and values and opportunities for their enjoyment, and it does not result in their impairment.

In determining whether impairment may occur, park managers consider the duration, severity, and magnitude of the impact; the resources and values affected; and direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the action. According to NPS policy, "An impact would be more likely to constitute an impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is: a) Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park; b) Key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or c) Identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents." (Director's Order 55)

This policy does not prohibit impacts to park resources and values. The National Park Service has the discretion to allow impacts to park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of a park, so long as the impacts do not constitute impairment. Moreover, an impact is less likely to constitute impairment if it is an unavoidable result of an action necessary to preserve the integrity of park resources or values.

One of the most visible impacts to the park sites is the proposed development of entry roads, parking areas, and a visitor entry pavilion (at Oakland). While this development will result in negligible short and long-term adverse impacts on soils, plants, and wildlife habitat, it more importantly will affect the cultural landscape of each site by introducing a type of development not previously located in those areas, as well as the associated vehicular and pedestrian activity. The cultural landscape at Magnolia is particularly sensitive due to the site's limited size. The site's limited size and limited accessibility options also require new development to be located in the foreground of the site as viewed from the road and riverbank. However, these impacts will not constitute impairment given the fundamental responsibility of the NPS to provide public access and opportunities for public enjoyment. In addition, mitigating actions would reduce the potential magnitude of adverse impacts. Such actions include limiting the amount of parking, especially bus parking at Magnolia, and using the best available data, including archeological and cultural landscape research, to sensitively locate development.

An indirect adverse impact will be changes to the character of the rural countryside due to increased traffic in the area and the potential for changes in land uses. These ripple effects of the park opening to the public and attracting visitors to the sites and potentially affecting adjacent land values are an unavoidable consequence of implementing the park's establishing legislation and consequently will not constitute impairment. Through the park's selected action, including partnership efforts with the heritage area and other entities, mitigating efforts will include encouraging through traffic and tour buses to use LA 1 rather than the rural river roads and exploring either a privately financed or a public-private joint initiative shuttle system. Through technical assistance to landowners and other cooperative avenues, the heritage area partnership will help protect the traditional rural land uses of the Cane River area.

The adaptive use and preservation of the many historic structures at the two sites would result in some loss of historic fabric. However this impact would not constitute impairment because it would be outweighed by the long-term protection of these resources for future generations.

In conclusion, the National Park Service has determined that the implementation of alternative 1, the selected action, will not result in impairment of resources and values in Cane River Creole National Historical Park.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

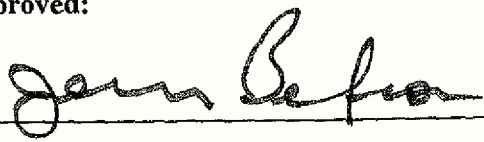
Public comment has been requested, considered, and incorporated into the planning process during major planning stages, and has also been considered in numerous other ways. Initial public scoping meetings were held in January and February 1996 in the City of Natchitoches and Cane River area. In 1996 a public scoping newsletter was distributed to the public and comments solicited. Public involvement for the heritage area management plan began in 1997 with a public scoping newsletter in March and public scoping meetings in April. This effort provided further opportunities for the public to obtain information and provide comment on park planning efforts. In 1996 and 1997, people with traditional associations to Magnolia and Oakland Plantations were interviewed as part of ongoing NPS ethnographic research.

In spring 1998, the National Park Service and the heritage area commission jointly prepared a newsletter and hosted public meetings about the planning alternatives that had been developed for the two plans. In conjunction with this effort, the NPS and commission hosted a meeting for Natchitoches area agencies and organizations at which planning alternatives for the park and heritage area were presented and comments solicited. In September 1998, representatives of the NPS and commission met with state agency representatives in Baton Rouge and obtained comment on both planning efforts.

About 350 copies of the *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* were distributed to the public for comment. The 60-day review and comment period began June 17, 2000 and closed August 15, 2000. During that time there were two public meetings in the Natchitoches/Cane River area as well as a meeting with state agency representatives in Baton Rouge. The draft document was also distributed to 11 tribes (federally and state recognized) for comment. Comments received on the draft document were summarized and responded to in the abbreviated *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. This final document presented all changes to the draft plan in response to public comments.

Consultation was also completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, and American Indian tribes.

Approved:

 3-29-01
Date

Regional Director
Southeast Region



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.