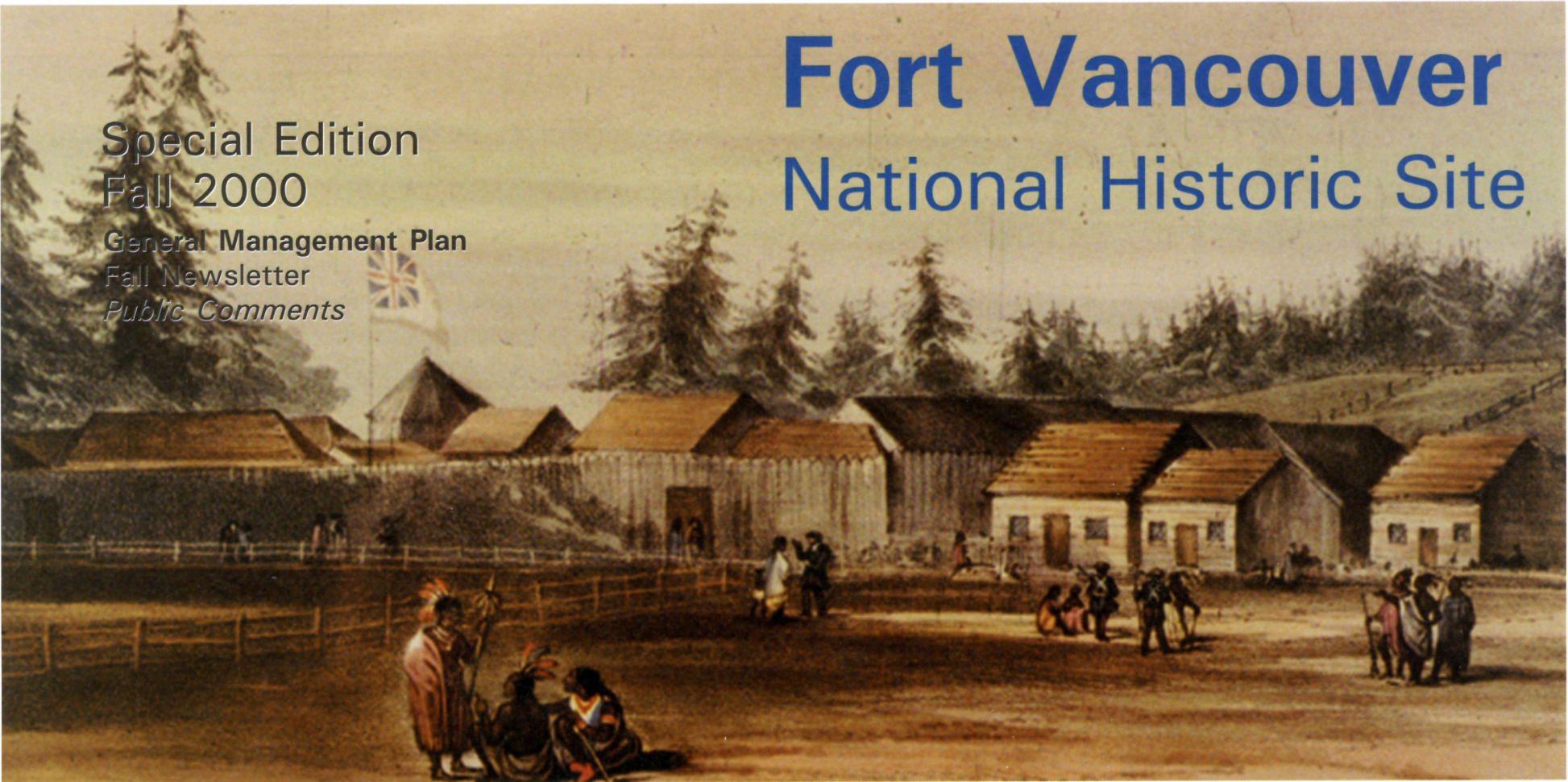




Fort Vancouver

National Historic Site

Special Edition
Fall 2000
General Management Plan
Fall Newsletter
Public Comments

A Message from the Superintendent



Today, under the care of the National Park Service, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site commemorates the tremendous influence of the fur trade in the exploration, settlement, and development of the Pacific Northwest and the United States Army post at Vancouver Barracks. As thoughtful stewards, the National Park Service last year began a multi-year public planning process to determine how we may best tell the story, serve the public, and preserve and protect the site in the coming years.

We received close to 200 comments, both verbal and written, from many of you. We greatly appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts, and we've tried to highlight them as best we can in this newsletter. Your thoughts will help guide us in preparing a draft general management plan that will be available for your review next summer.

Creating a vision for Fort Vancouver National Historic Site for the next 15 to 20 years is both a daunting and exhilarating task. Your continued involvement is needed. Working together we can ensure that as we move into this latest chapter of Fort Vancouver's history, we create the best possible future for this irreplaceable national historic site.

Tracy Fortmann
Superintendent



NPS Receives Public Comment on Management Plan

In the spring of 1999, the National Park Service (NPS) organized an interdisciplinary planning team comprised of staff from Fort Vancouver National Historic Site and the NPS support office in Seattle to begin a new general management plan for Fort Vancouver National Historic Site (NHS). The last plan for the park was prepared in 1978 and is now 22 years old.

The public process began in December 1999 when the NPS produced and mailed a scoping newsletter announcing the beginning of the planning process. The purpose of the newsletter was to encourage participation and comment on pressing park issues that should be addressed in a new management plan. The newsletter provided relevant information about Fort Vancouver NHS, an explanation of the importance and contents of a general management plan (GMP) and environmental impact statement (EIS), and a schedule of the planning steps including dates, times, and locations for the public scoping meetings.

Public Meetings Held

The NPS held two public meetings in January 2000 and received over 150 oral comments during the meetings. We also received numerous letters.

The first meeting was located in Vancouver, Washington on January 12, 2000 at the Water Resources Education Center. Some of the organizations represented include the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust, Clark County Historic Preservation Commission, Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, Vancouver Community Theatre, Downtown Vancouver Association, Fort Vancouver Historical Society of Clark County, and the American Volkswalkers Association. Forty-one people attended.

The second meeting was held the next day on January 13, 2000 at the Barclay House, in Oregon City, Oregon. (Oregon City is the location of the historic McLoughlin House, John McLoughlin's home after retiring as Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver.) Eleven people, including the mayor of Oregon City, attended as interested citizens or as representatives of the following organizations: McLoughlin Memorial Association, Oregon City Historic Landmarks Commission, Oregon City Tourism, and Oregon City Parks and Memorials.

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New Dates for GMP Planning Steps and Schedule General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

PLANNING ACTIVITY	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	
1 Gather Data and Establish Goals and Vision	Winter 2000	
2 Develop Alternatives	Fall 2000	*We Are Here
3 Prepare and Publish a Draft GMP/EIS	Summer 2001	
4 Revise Draft and Publish Final GMP/EIS	Fall 2001	
5 Begin Implementation	Winter 2001-2002	



Volunteers and staff reenact the annual arrival of the fur trapping brigades.

Written Comments Received

Page three of the December 1999 Scoping Newsletter had a “return form” for writing comments which could be mailed back to the NPS. We received a total of 42 letters, some several pages long. Of these, 29 were written from residents of Washington State (25 from Vancouver); 9 letters were from Oregon; and single letters came from Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, as well as one letter from Canada.

What We Heard

The following is a summary of all the comments we received. (We have tried to use your words whenever possible.) They have been divided into four topic areas and address issues within the authorized boundary of Fort Vancouver NHS (see map). In addition, some of the comments addressed issues for the Vancouver National Historic Reserve and the City of Vancouver. We have forwarded these letters to the Reserve partners. For a complete listing of each individual comment, contact the National Park Service, Planning and Partnerships, in Seattle, Washington at (206) 220-4109.

In our last newsletter to you, we listed the issues that we felt needed to be addressed during the GMP process. From these comments below, we will be selecting additional issues that the GMP needs to address. Thank you for your input.

Reconstruction, Re-use, Archeology, and Access at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

The continuation of building reconstruction within the fort was emphasized by many. There was a suggestion for reconstructing 20 buildings in and around the fort, and another suggestion that the number of existing reconstructed buildings (eight key buildings have been reconstructed) should be at least doubled. Buildings would not necessarily have to be fully reconstructed, but could be partially reconstructed for interpretive purposes and visual effect. One idea mentioned was the use of interpretive plaques or other features to identify buildings not yet built, but where the building footprint is identifiable.

One respondent mentioned reconstructing the gristmill, Lattie’s, and Ryan’s houses. The author of one letter mentioned completing the New Office building and including interpretation of Commander Thomas Baillie of the *H.M.S. Modeste* and the Hudson’s Bay Company maritime operations. Another idea included the reconstruction of the Wheat Store, another Store Warehouse, and Meat Store, and potentially use them as a visitor center and museum. One idea mentioned was to reconstruct features outside the fort, including roads, fences, the Company (Kanaka) Village, Owyhee Church (interpreting both the history of the Hawaiians and the story of John Coxe), and other historic landscape features. One commenter suggested that the airstrip be removed so that the historic landscape could be restored, including the historic pond and creek.

It was also recommended that St. James Catholic Church and cemetery be included in the National Historic Site boundary (it is currently inside the NHS authorized boundary and managed by the Department

of the Army as part of Vancouver Barracks). Several people wrote that they might have ancestors buried in the cemetery. Further, there were several written comments addressing concerns for the cemetery’s future, a desire for NPS to preserve the site, and to commemorate with a marker all the Hudson’s Bay Company inhabitants buried there.

One participant mentioned that the fort site could be better integrated with its historical surroundings within the Vancouver National Historic Reserve. Some people expressed interest in seeing a portion of the historic waterfront restored and to include an interpretive structure there. Many stated that they consider the waterfront an historical asset equal to the fort. A number of people also noted that the railroad is a visual barrier to the waterfront.

Several participants mentioned that archaeological collections should be more accessible to researchers, excavations should be continued, and artifacts displayed at the fort. There should be consistent and regular hours for public viewing of artifacts so the public can plan trips. Archeology and history students could get extra credit for volunteering.

One participant mentioned that the Old Post Headquarters building in the East Barracks could be a new administrative building for the NPS and the 1919 Motor Pool building could be readapted as a maintenance building. Other buildings could be used for regional NPS training. It was also mentioned that the East Barracks, which is within the authorized boundaries of the NHS, should be preserved since it is a primary area of fort archeological resources that are not currently preserved by the NPS and that tell much about the original residents of the fort.

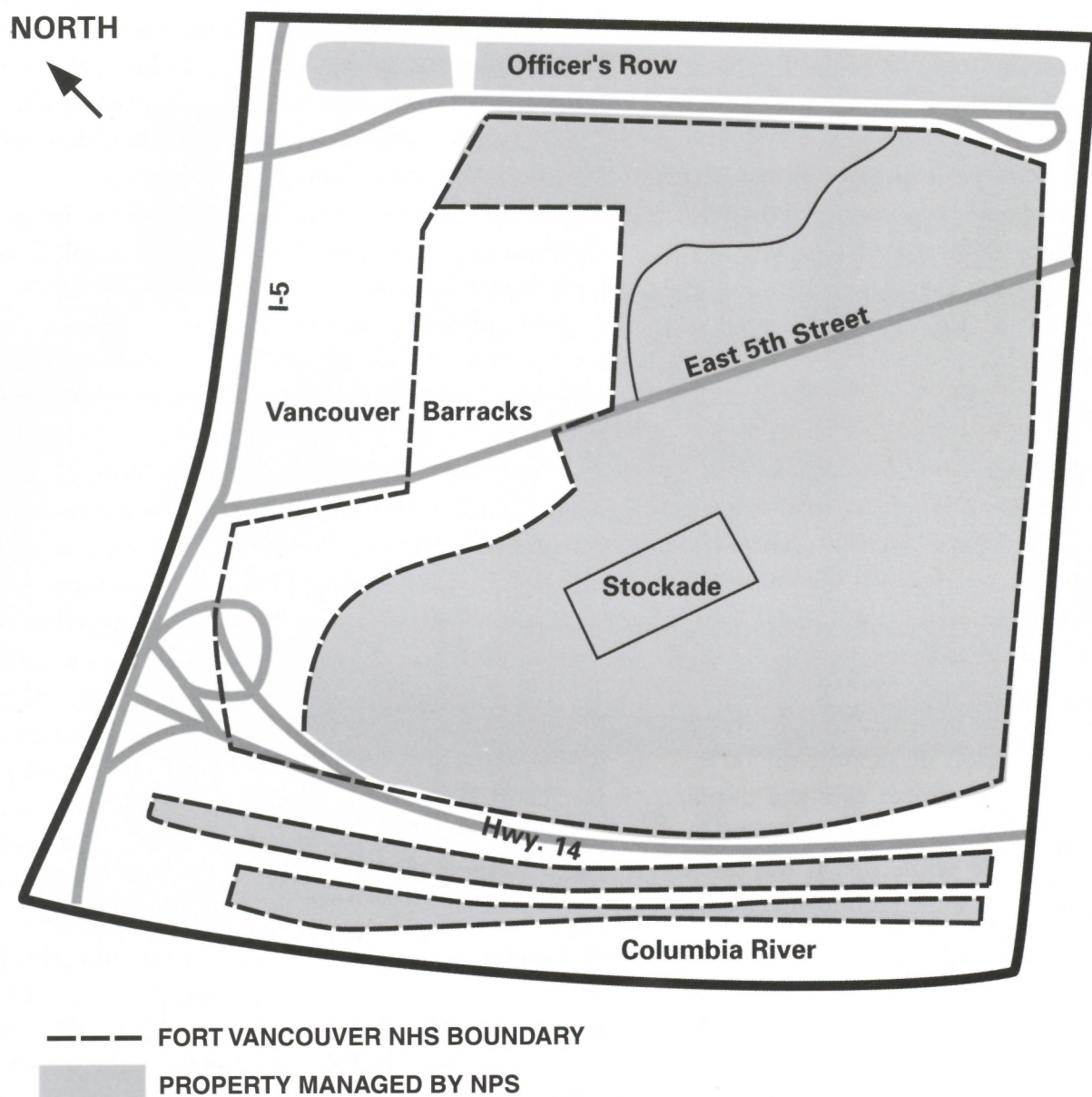
For better access, moving the visitor center closer to the fort was proposed, and a suggested location was the site of the former historic schoolhouses. Another mentioned removing the existing visitor center from the historic scene. Some saw the need for convenient parking near the fort including the addition of benches. One person proposed using Old Apple Tree Park on city property for additional fort parking. An open-air sight-seeing bus was proposed. A water taxi was proposed to access the NHS and other key points along the river, including a stop at Oregon City, Oregon. A pedestrian overpass could connect the fort to the waterfront. It was suggested that an internal pedestrian and bike trail system be developed to connect the fort with the city’s regional bike trail system (eventually connecting it potentially into a larger national trail system). Many mentioned the need for improving the signage from the highway to the site, as well as within the National Historic Reserve, and to increase the appeal of key entrances.

Tourism, Outreach, and Community Involvement

Some mentioned the need to emphasize the regional aspect of history, to publicize events more widely, and to keep commercialization low. There was a suggestion to connect the fort to its natural history, by interpreting the life and work of the botanist David Douglas and other naturalists. Many others mentioned the need to maintain community involvement and commitment, to build on partnerships, to include more living history, and to explore the possibility of utilizing local theatre groups. More outreach could be made to regional garden groups, with the prospect of marketing heritage garden aspects to the public. Some people asked whether the NPS and the City of Vancouver could develop a more cooperative partnership given their different philosophies and missions. How could the city best advise and assist Fort Vancouver NHS with its mission?

A proposal suggested that some programs be taken outside the fort to community centers and schools, and placed on the Internet. There was a proposal to pursue establishing a research center (not just a repository for artifacts) in cooperation with universities. The NPS could reconstruct the remaining store warehouses and use them for the research center. It was also noted that the Columbia River serves as a physical barrier to Portland area visitation to the fort including Portland schools.

Greater effort needs to be made to attract visitation, especially during the low visitation months. The city could develop more historic interests in the city to encourage visitors from the fort. Another participant suggested working with commercial maps to get Fort Vancouver on the map as an attraction. Some suggested that some major special tourist events and programs should be organized (brigade encampment, candlelight tours, reenactments) as many as 12 times a year. Some suggested that no entrance fee or a low fee be charged.



The Vancouver Barracks and Fort Vancouver National Historic Site are both federally owned. The NPS manages the national historic site; the US Army manages the barracks.

Officer's Row is owned and managed by the City of Vancouver.

The Fort is an integral part of our community and our national history. It represents a unique partnership between federal and local governments.

- Tracy Fortmann, Superintendent
Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

Others suggested that the special events be less crowded, perhaps by expanding special events such as a dinner at Chief Factor's house. Another respondent suggested asking the Air National Guard to reschedule practice flights to avoid disturbing special events. Merchants could advertise with posters and banners downtown. Pushcart vendors could sell food and drinks. Another suggestion to attract more visitors would be to hold a preview at the mall with people in period dress. Other special events could be organized and include a summer camp and a pioneer cooking school. One suggestion was to charge a fee all year, but to have special events free during good economic times. Some wanted to see the garden expanded. Many mentioned the importance of open space at the park to visitors. Others wanted to see adequate visitor services provided, such as food service, drinking fountains, and restrooms. Since the Columbia River was the center of commerce, some participants advised that the NHS should emphasize the natural history and the reasons why the fort was located near the waterfront. Some people mentioned the desire to bring tourists to Vancouver for the upcoming Lewis and Clark celebration.

There were some concerns about possible future concession facilities, staffing, and problems with unleashed pets. One letter mentioned reducing air traffic over Pearson Airfield due to visitor safety issues. Suggestions were made for marketing and developing local history products, such as board games and calendars, to be sold in the visitor center and throughout the city.

Interpretation and Education

Proposals regarding interpretation included expanding the interpretive message to include a broader time period and to incorporate additional interpretive methods such as slide shows, and art galleries. There is a need for more multicultural presentations about the roles of different cultures reflected at the fort, including Hawaiian, American Indian, British, and French-Canadian. Someone asked if the Kalapuyas were part of this culture mix. One participant recommended installing an interpretive sign illustrating a map of North America, setting the scene and indicating the importance of Fort Vancouver in the early 1800s, and showing routes of fur brigades and the Hudson's Bay Company's maritime trade. Other respondents suggested establishing better facilities, exhibits, and visual aids, in the visitor center, along walkways, and at the waterfront. Several participants mentioned the importance

of linking the National Historic Site with other historically-related sites, such as the McLoughlin Housen National Historic Site, Fort Clatsop National Memorial, and Whitman Mission National Historic Site. Another related idea is to facilitate connections with historic neighborhoods near the fort.

Some requests were made for more personal interpretation using volunteers as well as rangers. One participant suggested a broader, more creative curriculum for fourth graders and others studying Washington State history. Other suggestions included using reenactments to tell stories and to increase hands-on educational experiences for adults and children. This could include bringing oxen in for an annual event. Music could play at the bandstand everyday, and costumed musicians could play music from the past. The NPS could allow pow-wows in the orchard. The NPS could have available staff and volunteers so that the Carpentry Shop and Blacksmith Shop has interpreters in period dress.

Additional tours were proposed to include an archeological tour for middle school students and the public. The NPS could produce a booklet of quotations from journals and historic letters and republish the NPS booklet on Fort Vancouver. In addition, a new comprehensive film on the history of the fort and the role of the fur trade in the exploration and settlement of North America could be produced. The NPS could also provide training for living history volunteers.

For educational outreach, travelling exhibits could be made. There is a perceived need to interpret the whole story, not just the Hudson's Bay Company, but include the Army to AirCorps story using separate interpretive staff expertise. It was emphasized that Fort Vancouver NHS depicts a unique period in American history that is seldom interpreted elsewhere. The NPS could look at establishing an endowment program for funding buildings and educational programs.

There was an expressed desire to involve more schools and visitors outside Vancouver, using Web-based interaction opportunities. There is a need to establish an historical certification program for teachers and volunteers. Environmental education was also mentioned as important. What practices were used then that apply today? There was a suggestion to use Vancouver National Historic Reserve facilities for interpretive venues, and not have the Reserve overshadow the importance of Fort Vancouver. A new interpretive plan and visitor survey needs to be prepared by the NHS. Another interesting idea was to

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convert the existing visitor center into a multi-agency site for information on other federal agencies in the Pacific Northwest since the location is ideally suited near the Interstate.

Staffing and Other Comments

Several respondents addressed the need for staffing. Another participant suggested adding an assistant superintendent to deal with Vancouver National Reserve issues, adding a full-time archeologist, and studying the need for an NPS law enforcement staff on site.

Land ownership information needs to be updated along with the 25 year-old agreement with the city for their leasing the waterfront property from NPS. There was a question about the Army land disposal and environmental impact statement.

McLoughlin House

Some people mentioned the desire for the site in Oregon to become part of Fort Vancouver NHS. (It is now an "affiliated" unit, which means it is not federally owned or directly administered by the NPS, but it can utilize NPS technical or financial assistance.) Another mentioned the desire to coordinate planning of the McLoughlin House with Fort Vancouver NHS with help from the NPS support office in Seattle. At the same time there was concern about the site maintaining its own identity. Some participants stressed the importance of finding alternative funding sources for staff, interpretive program development (including use of the Internet), and new activities to enhance tourism and raise public awareness. There was also an expression of support for NPS technical assistance in the area of building preservation and the proper care and display of site artifacts. There were some concerns about the existing NPS fee policy and national passes and what implications that would have on income at the site. It was also suggested that interpretive exhibits be developed emphasizing John McLoughlin's role in telling the complex story of the time, including the roles played by the British and the United States.

Next Steps

The NPS, in cooperation with our partners, will be developing alternatives for the future protection, public use, and management of the national historic site. The revised schedule calls for the release of the *Draft Fort Vancouver NHS General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* to the public by summer of next year. Public meetings will again be held in conjunction with a formal public review period.

Fort Vancouver NHS Welcomes New Superintendent

In May, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site welcomed Tracy Fortmann as superintendent. She replaces Tony Sisto who relocated to the National Park Service (NPS) Pacific West Regional Office in San Francisco. "Tracy represents one of the best and brightest talents the Service has," said John Reynolds, Regional Director for the NPS, in making the appointment. "I am anxious to share this rising star with the community and partners."



Ms. Fortmann has been with the NPS for 19 years. She moved to Vancouver from Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) in San Francisco where she was the Chief of Public Affairs and Special Events. As the Chief, she oversaw a staff of 17 with a budget of \$1 million. She also was responsible for facilitating the GGNRA Advisory Commission, working with park partners, and addressing legislative initiatives and issues.

She has an M.A. in public administration and is a George Washington University graduate of a two-year philanthropy certificate program. She is also a graduate of the Government-wide Executive Potential Program. Assignments within her career have included serving as the lead in the multi-year public involvement process for the General Management Plan Amendment for the Presidio of San Francisco and working for 11 years in the NPS's Office of Policy in Washington D.C. as a senior policy analyst and program manager.

Superintendent
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