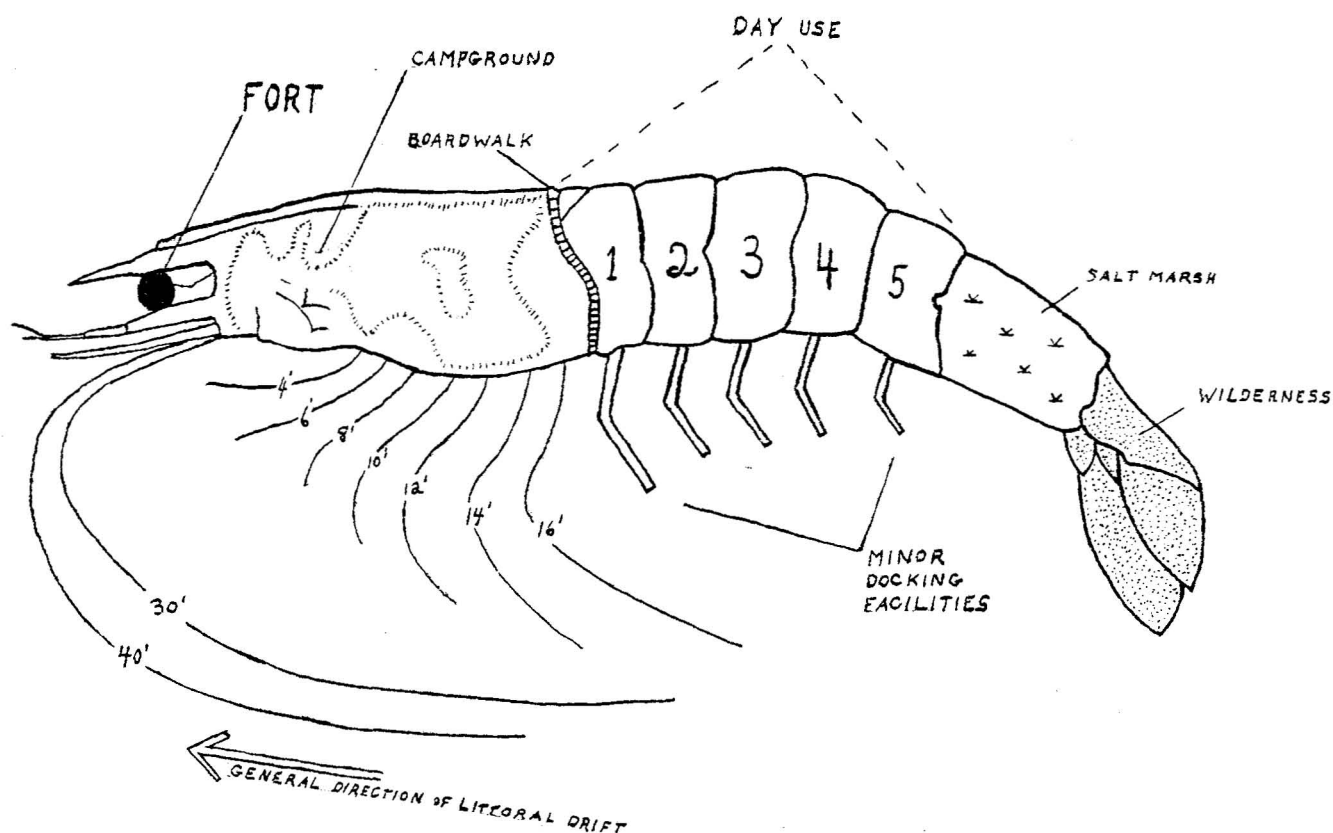


GULF ISLANDS

NATIONAL SEASHORE



GULF OF MEXICO

*Interpretive**Prospectus*
ON MICROFILM

SCANNED

2/20/02

INTERPRETIVE PROSPECTUS
GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE

FEBRUARY 1979

L. Clifford Soubier
Harpers Ferry Center

(Approved by Acting Regional Director, Charles E. Watson, by
memorandum of February 16, 1979)

LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

All action proposed in this plan must comply with the provisions of Section 106 of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 11593 as codified in the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36 CFR Part 800). Prior to a decision to implement any provisions of this plan, these procedures require that all cultural resources in or near the project areas must be identified and evaluated in terms of the National Register Criteria of Eligibility. The evaluation must be done by the Regional Director in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer. Additionally, the Criteria for Adverse Effect (36 CFR Part 800.8 and 800.9) must be applied by the Regional Director in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council Procedures completed as appropriate.

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SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

<u>Location</u>		<u>Exhibits</u>	<u>Waysides</u>	<u>Audiovisual</u>	<u>Reference Services</u>
Naval Live Oaks	pp.	5	5	5	
Santa Rosa		6	6		
Pensacola Forts		6-7	7		
Perdido Key		7-8	8		
Fort Pickens		8-11	9-11	8-11	11
Davis Bayou		12-14	12-14	12-14	

Most of the proposals are presently funded and many are in advanced stages of planning.

Additional funding is needed as follows:

	<u>Exhibits</u>		<u>Waysides</u>	<u>Audiovisual</u>		<u>Reference Services</u>	
	(51)	(52)	(55)	(61)	(62)	(56)	(57)
Perdido Key	\$ 7,000	\$37,000	\$ 9,000				
Fort Pickens							
Day-use Facility	7,000	37,000			\$15,000		
Building 5	15,000	75,000					
Batteries Cooper & 234	7,000	37,000		\$2,000	25,000		
Captain's Quarters						\$9,000	\$7,000
Amphitheater					15,000		
West Ship Island	7,000	37,000	27,000	1,500	3,000		

Introduction

A preliminary Interpretive Prospectus for Gulf Islands was prepared in 1973 by the Firm of Reynolds, Smith, and Hills, but was not approved. Since that time, planning of numerous facilities has proceeded and interpretive planning has been provided on an ad hoc basis. This writer attended meetings November 1977 with personnel of the National Seashore, Regional Office, Denver Service Center, and the aforementioned architectural firm, largely for the purpose of assigning interpretive functions to the Davis Bayou and Naval Live Oaks Visitor Centers. A similar meeting occurred in March 1978, to reach an agreement on concepts for the Santa Rosa and Pensacola Forts Areas. This plan, therefore, is partly for the purpose of filling in after the fact and documenting consensus on portions of the national seashore already in advanced stages of planning. In addition, the remainder of the national seashore will be considered in sufficient detail that, it is hoped, this document will resemble a full park Interpretive Prospectus.

A decision following the November meeting which has implications for the entire national seashore concerns audiovisual productions.

There will be a movie, primarily for use at the Davis Bayou Area, on the subject of the Gulf Coast ecosystem. A slide program on Gulf Islands in general will be of use in all units for basic familiarization and for off-site. A movie will be produced which focuses on the evolution of seacoast fortifications. All three will be usable throughout the national seashore, and off-site, in varying degrees.

The Resource

The string of barrier islands which comprise Gulf Islands provides a combined total of over 100 miles of shoreline offering wide, gently-sloping beaches of fine white sand and clear, blue-green water combined with a mild climate.

The predominant resources for public use and enjoyment are recreational. The national seashore also includes natural and cultural resources, including a wilderness area, worthy of preservation and interpretation. The island/mainland relationship provides habitats for ecosystems of esthetic and economic value to man, and the strategic importance of harbors embraced by the islands has engendered a rich historical resource embodying the full story of seacoast defense.

Theme

The offshore islands of the Gulf Coast shelter lagoons and marshes which are important habitats for a rich variety of marine life. From the earliest settlement by Europeans, these islands were likewise perceived as protection for the major ports and great river systems which empty into the gulf. Forts at a few strategic points easily controlled entry. The barrier islands thus are aptly named; they form a barrier to natural forces and to human endeavors.

In both spheres a balance is maintained by such barriers. In terms of the natural scene, the balance creates a safe harbor for sea life at a delicate stage of development. But nature is not static in form;

only the forces are constant, a fact particularly noticeable on the Gulf Coast where islands shift constantly. It is the relative rapidity of change and movement which provokes notice. To say that all things change is to state what is obvious -- and therefore unperceived. Confronted daily with the uncertainties of human affairs, we are inclined to view the natural world, including the cycle of seasons, as comfortably steady. (Doubtless this is one of the great attractions of parks). It is something of a shock to view a phenomenon like Ship Island, where build-up of the shore has left Fort Massachusetts (the human reference point) a considerable distance from its strategic location. Such movement is part of the natural pattern of the coast; a change in the island's shape does not change its fundamental character.

In the human sphere, however, things have moved more rapidly. Prior to the 20th Century, harbor defense was severely restricted by geography and the technology of the times, just as dependence on natural materials for shipbuilding made the live oaks important. Masonry fortifications had lost their utility long before Ship Island shifted and before Fort McRee sank into the bay off Perdido Key. Metal ships, airplanes, and finally missiles have largely eliminated the limitations which determined the area's military significance. Man's ability to eliminate natural barriers, often beyond nature's capacity to adjust to such changes, has had enormous impact on the coastal environment, even threatening to destroy resources which

attracted settlement.

It's our turn to protect the barriers.

Visitors

Visitors to Gulf Islands are predominantly seeking recreational opportunities, with a large proportion of local, repeat use. There is, however, a percentage of visitors with more specific interests, such as the forts. As has already been observed at Fort Pickens, many come for the beach and become interested in other resources and activities. This tendency, coupled with the fact that the park is so widely dispersed even local visitors may be unaware of opportunities in other units, leads to the conclusion that three levels of public contact are indicated. (1) Through cooperation with State authorities, orientation publications should be obtainable on Interstate 10. (2) At major entry or assembly points of the park, a very brief orientation to the park as a whole is needed, along with information to opportunities at hand. (3) Deeper interpretation of resource in a given unit, usually provided at a point removed from function #2.

Recommendations for facilities and programs follow, by location.

Naval Live Oaks

The Naval Live Oaks Reservation is a site of the first order of significance in the history of the conservation of national resources in the United States. Until the development of iron warships, live oak timber was regarded as a resource absolutely vital to national defense.

In 1828, the United States purchased the 1,337.87 acres comprising the present Naval Live Oaks Reservation, the first of numerous tracts set aside to assure a continued supply of naval timber. The same year, President John Quincy Adams authorized the establishment on the Reservation of the first, and only, federal tree farm or plantation.

Maps at the information desk and in introductory exhibits will orient visitors to the immediate vicinity and relate the Naval Live Oaks Area to Gulf Islands National Seashore as a whole.

Exhibits will deal with the historic use of the oaks, both as raw material and finished product. Historic diagrams showing how portions of the trees lent themselves to 19th Century shipbuilding along with specimen of the material would be featured.

The building will be adjacent to a significant shell midden. Early occupancy will be interpreted within the center as well as with wayside exhibits on the trail.

The auditorium will be provided with both movie and sound/slide equipment to take advantage of any of the programs presently conceived for the park as a whole, and for special programs.

Major on-site interpretation of the live oaks will be via wayside exhibits about 1,000 feet west of the Visitor Center. Exact choice of location will hopefully take advantage of trees which can help illustrate the live-oak plantation operation, i.e., choice of trees

with potential for certain parts of a ship. The General Development Plan also calls for four other shelter/overlooks on the self-guided trail system.

Santa Rosa Area

The recently completed day-use facility includes a room for public contact which will mainly serve as an adjunct to recreational activities and to dispense information about other units of the park. Existing information and exhibit facilities will be supplemented with colorful banners, mood photos, and changing exhibits featuring local artists. A wayside exhibit on the overpass to the beach will briefly acquaint visitors with the rationale for the type of development here, i.e., clustered development to minimize impact on the dunes. A small exhibit adjacent to the visitor contact station, looking toward the ranger residence, will explain the solar water heating equipment therein. A wayside exhibit on the boardwalk will interpret the dunes which the walk passes over, and the purpose of the boardwalks. The newly acquired Okaloosa Area requires something to identify it as part of the National Seashore. The wayside exhibit planner will examine the area for inclusion of an exhibit relating the unit to the seashore.

Pensacola Forts

Contact stations will be constructed at Fort Barrancas and at Advanced Redoubt. Access to the interior of Fort Barrancas and the Water Battery will be by guided tour only. In addition to providing restrooms, the contact stations will be an assembly point for guided

tours as well as the starting point for self-guided access at Redoubt. In addition to relating basic reasons why the forts were built, visitors need to be apprised of two main points at the outset: (1) the relationship between Fort Barrancas and Redoubt, and (2) the relationship between the Pensacola fortifications and the other two points of harbor defense which constituted the triangular system: Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island and Fort McRee on Perdido Key. Protection from land attack was included in the system.

Fort Barrancas requires an exhibit on the third system of fortifications and a brief photo-essay on soldier life, and a small display of artifacts. Wayside exhibits at a few key points around the forts convey some basic information about functions of various architectural features, for the benefit of self-guided visitors, and reinforce the overall harbor defense theme. A publication will be needed to provide more detail.

To aid the guided tours, large "flash cards", hand or easel held, will be provided. These can be stored at various points along the route inside the fort and pulled out to illustrate the narrative.

Perdido Key

A day-use facility will be constructed, with contact station, along the lines of the Santa Rosa facility. Some orientation to the national seashore as a whole would be useful for visitors using this portion of it. Visitation is predominately local, but highly transitory, necessitating frequent re-education.

Orientation to immediate resources will include reference to Fort McRee.

The biggest resource management problem at Perdido Key is use of 4-wheel drive vehicles. Here is an opportunity for interpretation to aid significantly in Resource Management. Interpretation will emphasize the recreationist's vital role in assuring the continued vitality of dunes and related resources, perhaps through photos of dune destruction and its consequences. The theme should be presented in a positive manner, addressing the visitor as one who would surely not engage in such activities against his own interests.

The platform at the marsh area merits a wayside exhibit interpreting the importance of marshlands, along the lines of the theme at Davis Bayou.

Access to the historic zone is limited; however, a wayside exhibit is warranted for the benefit of those who reach this point.

Fort Pickens

A beach day-use facility, similar to that in the Santa Rosa Area will be constructed in the Fort Pickens Area. The contact station within will require only such interpretation as will tell visitors about activities in the vicinity and the unit's place in Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Building Five, a T-shaped structure ca. 1900, presently serves for administrative headquarters and interpretation. With some alteration of Building Five, it could serve quite well for expanded interpretive use. An audiovisual room will be required for the film dealing with coast fortifications, as well as other programs as needed.

Generally, history interpretation, other than the movie, will be handled on-site at various fort structures. Exhibits in Building Five will deal with natural history, although one exhibit about the fort itself would be useful to provoke interest in the fort tour, and to connect the fort thematically with the natural story as formulated in the theme statement. Subjects for Natural History exhibits are:

Hurricanes change the shape and size of barrier islands by moving huge amounts of sand.

Plants and animals adapt to drought, sandy and salty conditions on barrier islands by camouflage, by avoiding the hot sun, and by moving in special ways.

Fort Pickens: Coastal Defense. "It would be appropriate to note that even the first Spanish settlers recognized that control of the island and the bluffs across the channel was essential for control of the harbor, one of the best natural ports of the Gulf Coast. Even though the structures and their precise locations changed over time, the defense theory did not. When the United States began fortification of the harbor in 1829, the Army built Pickens on the

island, Barrancas on the bluffs, and McRee on Perdido Key, thus creating virtually impregnable triangulation of cross-fire."

(Quoted from Preliminary Interpretive Prospectus, by Reynolds, Smith, and Hills, 1973).

Wayside exhibits (about four, initially) will expand interpretation of Fort Pickens to encompass the Spanish period through World War II.

Battery Cullum/Sevier encompasses more than one period of fortification, consequently some of the evolution of coastal forts can be interpreted here. This battery contains two useable ammunition lifts, which might be put into operation.

The disappearing gun and shield guns at Batteries Cooper and 234 are among the few remaining of such pieces and warrant considerable attention. This complex of fortification and armament (including the observation tower) are an extraordinary historic scene, and great care must be exercised to protect its integrity. This should be born in mind if any additional development takes place here, such as extending parking. Two rooms in Battery Cooper are adaptable for exhibit and audiovisual use to interpret the function of both the disappearing gun and the shield guns, with a short audiovisual program utilizing actual footage of the guns in operation. Exhibits would deal with the range of the guns and photos of the wartime scene at this or similar installations. An interesting footnote would be an exhibit on World War II scrap drives, which sealed the fate of most of the great guns. Humidity control will be required for both exhibit and AV and furnished areas, and will need to be manned for protection.

A wayside exhibit plan will be required to coordinate interpretation of the military structures on the tour. Approximately six wayside exhibits will be required in addition to those mentioned above for Fort Pickens proper. These will include natural history interpretation, with subjects appropriate to the central theme, such as the shifting of the island and changes in ecosystems engendered by man's work.

Battery Langdon presents a problem or opportunity, depending on the point of view. Being the first military structure encountered in approaching Fort Pickens, it can be a bit of a puzzle to the uninitiated. The wayside exhibit which describes its function, although adequate in itself, does not convey much to anyone totally unfamiliar with such bunkers and coast fortifications. A wayside exhibit cannot encompass the whole story, although it might be treated as a "tickler", hinting at the general story which can be learned. If it is determined that a visitor center is needed in the future, the battery would make an intriguing one, with the large front opening glassed in.

Captains Quarters - For the purpose of interpreting post life, the Captains Quarters should be furnished ca. 1930 as a background for living history, providing interpretation of one of the "between wars" periods. Most of the history of such installations consisted of maintaining a token of military preparedness, which really amounted to unpreparedness. A furnishings plan will be needed.

Amphitheater - A more adequate screen and projection booth will be provided for the campground amphitheater.

Davis Bayou

The visitor center for the Mississippi District will be located near a representative remnant of marsh environment which once characterized the now highly developed Biloxi-Gulfport area, and which is a morsel of the nursery for the gulf fisheries. Interpretation will revolve around this highly important resource, which owes its existence to the barrier islands, and extend to the island/mainland protective relationship.

A movie will carry much of the burden of interpreting the interdependence, productivity, vulnerability, and relationships among the inhabitants of bayou, sound, and barrier island. The main exhibit will consist of a diagrammatic mural showing the aquatic environment augmented with mounted specimens, models, photos, etc. The exhibit will introduce the visitor to the complex interrelationships of bayou and offshore island ecology.

The secondary function of the visitor center will be to orient visitors to the national seashore as a whole, as well as to the immediate resources. This will be accomplished through personal services, maps, and publications.

A self-guiding trail beginning at the visitor center will expose the visitor first-hand to the marsh environment. Wayside exhibits will relate the off-shore islands to the mainland environment as well as deal with the resources at hand.

West Ship Island

Most visitors to West Ship Island will be heading for the beach, where a day-use facility will be constructed. As in the case of the Santa Rosa facility, the public contact room will serve as an adjunct to recreational activities and to dispense information about other units of the seashore. A boardwalk from the dock will fork at an observation tower, one path leading to Fort Massachusetts (and then to the shore, with dune crossing), the other to the day-use facility. A wayside exhibit at the junction will give a brief account of the fort and schedule of fort tours. A boatload at once is too many for a tour, but if visitors are aware of tour times, it is no imposition to return to the fort in the course of a day at the beach. If heavy use warrants, it might be advisable to have some sort of sign-up system, limited to a reasonable tour number, at this point.

Wayside exhibits on the boardwalk, especially at the dune crossings, will interpret the island's natural history and accomplish a preservation goal by pointing out to visitors why foot traffic is regulated in this manner.

Fort Massachusetts. The French were the first to grasp the strategic importance of Ship Island. An expedition launched for the purpose of establishing a colony near the mouth of the Mississippi River located a base camp in 1699 on the east end of Ship Island to take advantage of the natural deep water harbor. The island also dominated the channel giving access to the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, con-

sequently its military significance continued to be recognized, and construction of the present fort was begun in 1859. Although the exterior walls were finished in 1870, the Civil War had proved the obsolescence of masonry forts, and the fort was never completed. The fort will be interpreted largely on a self-guided basis augmented with personal services. However, some introductory visual aids would help to establish some points which are difficult to convey on the tour. One of the casemates would serve as an assembly area with such things as engineer's drawings, a map showing the area from New Orleans to Pensacola to set the fort in its functional relation to the land, and an illustration of the difference between smooth-bore and rifled cannon. The usefulness of the fort was directly related to the effective range of the guns. Research is under way on the fort's use as a Confederate Prisoner of War camp. Proper placement of the United Daughters of the Confederacy plaques will be determined by the results of this research.

An observation tower is to be constructed from which visitors will be able to see the other islands, as well as getting a better grasp of the shifting shoreline. An audio message, augmented by identifying pointers, will interpret features visible from the tower.

Some of the non-military history of the island warrants interpretation. Until the Gulfport harbor was constructed in 1901, Ship Island remained an important port, primarily as an anchoring point for exportation of Yellow Pine from the central Gulfport region. At one point, a yellow

fever quarantine station functioned here. Interpretation of these matters could be handled by wayside exhibits if historic photographs could be located.

Planning Team

Gulf Islands National Seashore

Franklin O. Pridemore, Superintendent
Noel J. Pachta, Assistant Superintendent
Mary Dodd, Chief of Interpretation

Southeast Regional Office

Norman Bishop, Chief Naturalist

Harpers Ferry Center

Kip Stowell, Division of Exhibits
James Mulcahy, Division of Exhibits
Brian Jones, Division of Audiovisual Arts
Tom Kleiman, Division of Audiovisual Arts
Ray Price, Division of Wayside Exhibits
Bill Brown, Division of Reference Services
L. Clifford Soubier, Division of Interpretive Planning