



NEW BEDFORD WHALING NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

CHARTING THE FUTURE

A SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

I am pleased to announce that the Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park is now available for your review and comment.

We undertook this process almost three years ago, first gathering information about the city's people and historic resources. Extensive research and consultation with many local people and institutions yielded the knowledge that is the founding basis for the plan. Thoughtful participation throughout the process by park partners, city offices, community groups, other agencies and institutions, and many individuals has been instrumental in getting us to this point.

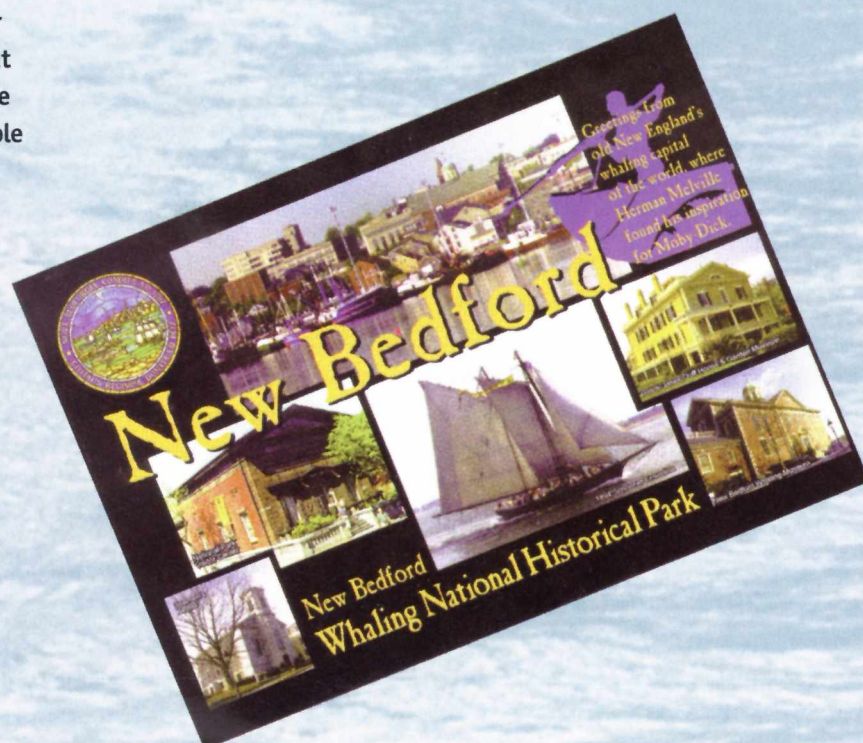
The draft plan/EIS describes three management options, one of them the preferred alternative, or management proposal. This newsletter summarizes the options as well as the context and criteria for the draft plan.

The National Park Service believes the management proposal offers the best balance of resource preservation and public use through an exemplary model of public/private partnership. It would give New Bedford national visibility and strengthen long-term protection for the inherent attributes of the park and park-associated sites. We also visualize a setting animated with evocative activities that would stir visitors' imaginations and stories that would enrich their experiences. Visiting New Bedford would be fun and memorable, and increased tourism would contribute to the local economy.

Public involvement has been integral to this process. We are eager to move the process forward through the final steps to completion and implementation of the plan, and your continued participation is crucial to the outcome. While this summary will inform and, we hope, excite you about our aspirations for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, we encourage you to review the full document. You will find information about its availability and the timetable for public review at the end of this supplement.

We invite your comments and welcome your assistance. Please share your thoughts about the draft plan with us so that collectively we can make the final document the best possible blueprint for this park's future as part of New Bedford.

John Piltzecker
Superintendent



The bark *Wanderer*, the last square-rigged whaleship to leave New Bedford
photo by Albert Cook Church, c.1920
Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum



Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

“At last . . . we stood on board the schooner. Hoisting sail, it glided down the Acushnet River. On one side, New Bedford rose in terraces of streets, their ice-covered trees all glittering in the clear, cold air. Huge hills and mountains of casks on casks were piled upon her wharves, and side by side the world-wandering whale ships lay silent and safely moored at last; while from others came a sound of carpenters and coopers, with blended noises of fires and forges to melt the pitch, all betokening that new cruises were on the start; that one most perilous and long voyage ended, only begins a second; and a second ended, only begins a third, and so on, forever and for aye. . .” Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

Introduction

To the eyes of the 21-year-old Melville, about to embark on the adventurous whaling voyage that inspired his epic tale, New Bedford resonated with the vibrancy and fruits of maritime commerce. Melville’s words evoke the earthy sights, sounds, and smells of its teeming waterfront as well as the outward symbols of prosperity spawned by whaling and its related trades.

Indeed, whaling was the catalyst for New Bedford’s early development and success. Through the early 1800s the town grew rapidly and progressively to displace Nantucket as the epicenter of the industry. Entrepreneurial spirit and commercial enterprises flourished. Maritime industries connected to whaling ships thrived along the waterfront. Business prospered, and construction kept pace as citizens endeavored to build an attractive city. Public buildings became architectural expressions of monumentality and permanence.

The eventual decline of commercially valuable whale stocks led to more extended and intensive pursuits of them, even far into the Arctic. Ultimately,



Casks of whale oil Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

a dwindling market for whale products and other demographic, economic, environmental, and technological factors ended New Bedford’s signature industry.

Textile manufacturing gradually supplanted whaling as the city’s primary industry. Commercial activity moved away from the waterfront as the city evolved into one of the nation’s leading textile centers, transforming the character of its commercial neighborhoods. Transformed as well

were the cultural mosaic and social fabric of the community. Population growth, sparked by the textile mills that attracted immigrants, further diversified the ethnic mix that had characterized New Bedford’s whaling era.

A mid-1920s ebb in textile manufacturing was fortuitously offset by the emergence of commercial fishing as an economic lifeline. Harbor improvements eventually made New Bedford a premier fishing port.

Nonetheless, severe decline of the waterfront district continued. Community-based efforts began in the 1960s to preserve, rehabilitate, and restore a working waterfront and the city’s historic core. This work has spurred a number of preservation initiatives, partnerships, and incentives, including national historic landmark designations. Collaborations between public and private organizations, both nonprofit and for-profit, have heightened public awareness of New Bedford’s cultural legacy and helped stabilize some of its historic assets.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW BEDFORD WHALING NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK IN 1996 RECOGNIZED THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS COMMUNITY’S RICH HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE, AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS. THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IS NOW PROPOSING TO SHARE THE STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITY WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR PRESERVING THIS PRECIOUS HERITAGE INTO THE NEXT MILLENIUM.



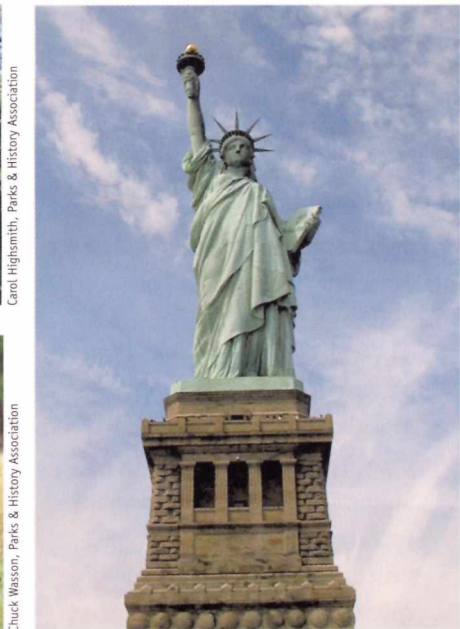
Aerial view of New Bedford's waterfront historic district
Courtesy of the City of New Bedford



Frederick Douglass Home National Historic Site



Antietam National Battlefield



Statue of Liberty National Monument



Yellowstone National Park



Martin Luther King, Jr. at Lincoln Memorial



Badlands National Park

What It Means to be a National Park

“ . . . to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”
—National Park Service Organic Act, 1916

By any measure national parks are special places. They refresh our minds and recharge our spirits. Some areas conferred with national park designation protect noteworthy natural systems and scenic splendor. Cultural sites represent people

or events that helped shape the history of this country. All parks offer superb recreational opportunities; some were established specifically for that purpose. Each park's intrinsic values are preserved for public enjoyment and inspiration both now and in the future. Collectively, national parks embody the story of America and its contributions to world history and culture. They substantially define us as caretakers of our heritage and celebrate who we are as a people.

The National Park Service manages 379 units of the National Park System. Each has its own particular niche among places of national significance in the park system. The legislation that created New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in 1996 acknowledged that

“ . . . the National Park System presently contains no sites commemorating whaling and its contribution to American history.” Further, it recognized “ . . . the city of New Bedford was the 19th century capital of the world's whaling industry and retains significant architectural features, archival materials, and museum collections illustrative of this period. . . .” Finally, the law affirmed that “ . . . New Bedford's historic resources provide unique opportunities for illustrating and interpreting the whaling industry's contribution to the economic, social, and environmental history of the United States and provide opportunities for public use and enjoyment. . . . The purposes of the park, in the words of the act, are “ . . . to help preserve, protect, and interpret the

resources within the areas described. . . .” “ . . . to collaborate with the city of New Bedford and with associated . . . organizations to further the purposes of the park. . . .,” and “ . . . to provide opportunities for the inspirational benefit and education of the American people.”

The National Park Service is charged with carrying out this mission at New Bedford in league with the city and community partners.

“The national park idea, the best idea we ever had. . . . Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best. . . .”
—Wallace Stegner, 1983



Park Description

New Bedford Whaling NHP encompasses 34 acres spread over 13 city blocks, including the New Bedford Historic District, a national historic landmark district. The schooner *Ernestina*, a national historic landmark berthed at State Pier on the waterfront, is considered to be within the park. The National Park Service may also assist in preserving and interpreting several properties integral to the park but outside its boundary: the southwest corner of State Pier, Waterfront Park, the Wharfinger Building, the Bourne Counting House, and the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum.

The park boundary embraces more than 70 properties, most of which are historic structures in private ownership. Some are owned and managed by other government agencies. Most of the sites named in the legislation that are outside the park boundary are located within the designated port area (DPA) on the waterfront. They are subject to local and state land-use regulations, including specific DPA provisions intended to preserve and promote maritime industries.

Park Mission

New Bedford Whaling NHP helps to preserve, protect, and interpret certain districts, structures, and artifacts located in New Bedford, Massachusetts, that are associated with the history of whaling and related social, economic, and environmental themes for the benefit and inspiration of this and future generations. These efforts will be undertaken in partnership with the city of New Bedford, local and regional institutions, and the Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska.

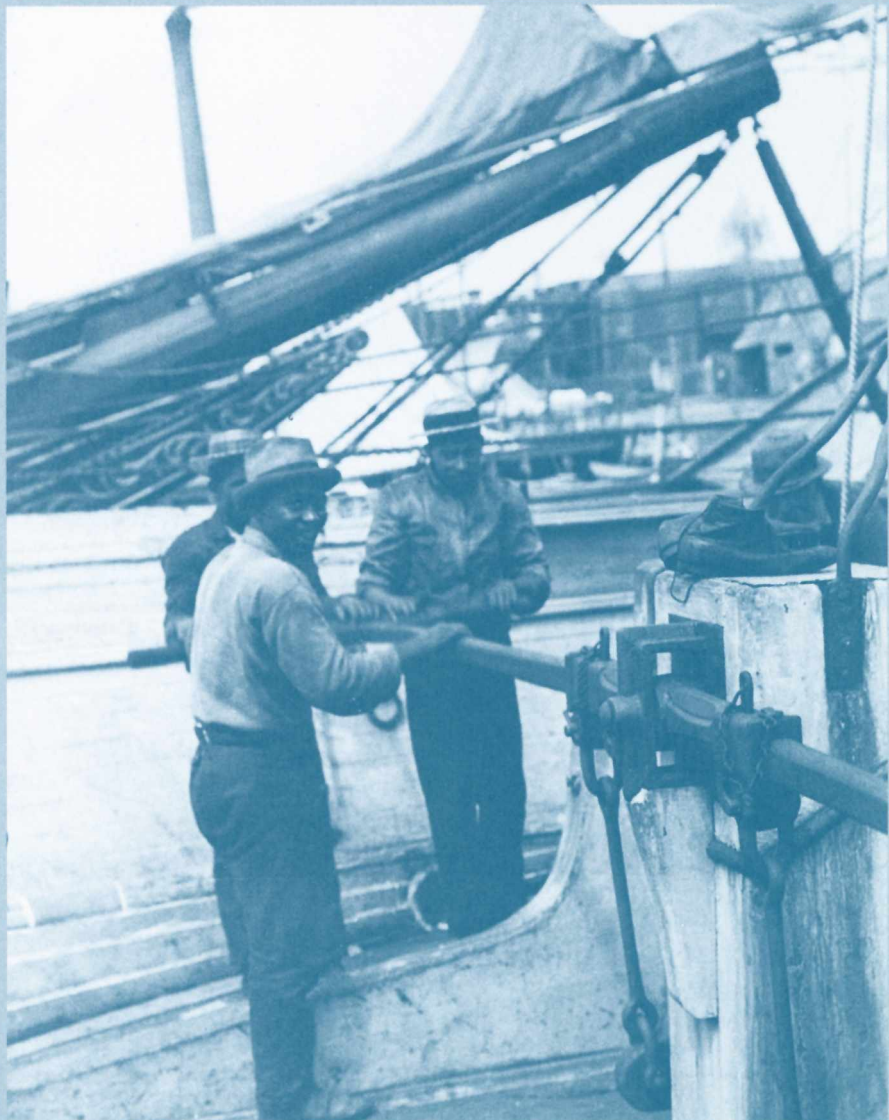
Park Significance

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park commemorates a living history and heritage reaching back to New Bedford's dynamic era as the world's foremost whaling port during the 19th century. This history is preserved through a broad assortment of cultural resources—historic landscapes, buildings, and museum and archival collections—that collectively recount the story of a remarkable time. During much of the 19th century, whaling was one of America's leading industries contributing to the new nation's foreign and domestic economic and political vitality. New Bedford's whaling merchants operated a complex business network that supported the whaling industry and included shipbuilding, rope and sail making, finance and insurance. The diversity of the whaling fleet's crewmembers—representing cultures from around the world—enriched New Bedford with a cosmopolitan influence that continues to this day.

Management Goals

Seven broad goals, rooted in the park's enabling legislation and its mission statement, frame the management direction for New Bedford Whaling NHP. The National Park Service and its partners will work together to realize and sustain these ideals in perpetuity.

- Through partnerships with local, regional, and national institutions, organizations, and communities, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park supports the preservation of the historic landscapes, structures, museum, and archival collections in New Bedford that are associated with the history of whaling.
- The park contributes to the accumulation of knowledge and understanding of historic resources related to the social, economic, and environmental history of whaling and their associated themes, and fosters the stewardship of these resources through a network of private and public partners.
- New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park collaborates with a wide range of institutions within the City of New Bedford and beyond to promote the delivery of high-quality, comprehensive, interpretive, cultural, and educational programming to the general public.
- At New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park visitors understand the global dimensions of the city's whaling industry and maritime trades (past, present, and future), including their social, economic, and environmental history, the diversity of cultures associated with the industry, and its relationship to arctic exploration and Native Alaskan cultures.
- Visitor pathways to destinations within the city are safe and easy to navigate. Virtual pathways guide visitors to well-designed and well-developed destinations on the Internet that are easy to find and use.
- The park and its partners achieve these goals in a flexible, cost-effective, and responsive manner.
- The National Park Service recognizes that New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park is a source of community identity and pride and that positive, local participation in support of the park will yield success. New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park fosters a climate in which community initiatives and collaborations are encouraged.



left: Lowering the bow boat on the bark *Sunbeam* at sea
right: Demonstrating the use of the windlass on the bark *Sunbeam* in New Bedford
Photos by Clifford Ashley, 1904 Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

Interpretive Themes

The legislation that established the park clearly identifies interpretation as a key activity and the history of American whaling and its impacts as primary themes for interpretation. Through various interpretive programs and media the National Park Service and its partners will help visitors understand and appreciate the substance and import of these themes.

- New Bedford's geographic location influenced its development into the world's foremost whaling port in the 19th century.
- Whales provided important and valuable products, and the hunt for them fostered the development of highly specialized technologies and supported the economic base of New Bedford and the nation.
- The nature of a whaling voyage, requiring long separation from home and family, contributed to the development of unique cultures shipboard and ashore.
- In pursuit of whales, New Bedford's fleet traveled the world's oceans and brought large numbers of Americans into contact with other cultures, including the native people of northern Alaska; in the process, the whaling fleet introduced materials, technology, plants, animals, and diseases into these cultures, which led to profound changes in the cultures and environments they visited.
- In the critical century following America's independence, when scientific institutions were being founded and U.S. policy was being formed, information and artifacts collected by whalers greatly expanded America's knowledge of the world.
- Whale hunting led to a decline in whale populations worldwide. Some species were endangered as a result of the hunt.
- Whaling had an impact on the American imagination and influenced American literature, painting, fashion, and folk art. In New Bedford the whaling economy financed homes, businesses, and public buildings, and influenced the local architecture and landscape.
- New Bedford today reflects its heritage as the 19th-century whaling capital of the world. Many of the communities that participated in the whaling industry continue to contribute to the cultural fabric of the city. The descendents of those who first came to New Bedford aboard local whaleships developed thriving communities, which have grown to become a major cultural and political force in the region.



Inupiat Heritage Center

Whaling in Alaska

Over the latter half of the 1800s, many New Bedford whaling vessels voyaged to the North Slope of Alaska, often wintering over to await the spring whaling season. Some New Bedford whalers may have settled in Arctic villages, and some North Slope residents trace their ancestry to the "Yankee whalers." The Inupiat people of the North Slope still practice subsistence whaling.

The Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, opened in 1999, preserves the language and knowledge of these native people and promotes the collection, preservation, and exhibition of materials significant to

their traditional culture and history. The center is legislatively associated with New Bedford Whaling NHP. It features an exhibit produced by the park in collaboration with the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the New Bedford Free Public Library. The park and its partners would work with the center to develop collaborative programs.



CHARTING THE FUTURE FOR NEW BEDFORD WHALING NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

General management plans (GMPs) for national parks are conceptual documents that articulate a framework to guide problem-solving and decision-making for a span of 10–15 years. The process to develop a general management plan for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park has entailed extensive research, analysis, and public involvement. A number of public meetings, workshops, and media presentations have offered opportunities for citizen input and participation. Many ideas have been shared, concerns voiced, and strategies proposed. The end result of this effort is a draft general management

plan that describes a preferred option for managing the park and two alternatives.

Each alternative required analysis of its potential impacts on the area's cultural resources; interpretation, education, and visitor services; socioeconomic environment; parking, circulation, and access; coastal zone management; and park operations. The planning issues related to park administration, resource protection, visitor services, and access were evaluated for each option. Finally, each option had to be assessed in light of several other major projects and initiatives that could affect

park programming and administration. The GMP will prescribe feasible, collaborative strategies for long-term resource protection, visitor services, and partner relationships. Moreover, it will identify development proposals and their costs, address carrying capacity and park boundaries, and delineate the park's association with the Inupiat Heritage Center.

PARTNERSHIPS

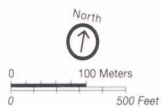
New Bedford Whaling NHP exemplifies a relatively new national park paradigm: Federal ownership of parklands is limited and partnerships are paramount in carrying

out the park's mission and fulfilling the vision and goals for its future. All of the management options considered would rely on alliances between the National Park Service and its partners to achieve those goals. Collaboration will yield positive results, building on a solid foundation of historic preservation, research, and programming laid by other institutions. Cooperative agreements with institutions associated with local whaling history will further preservation, development, interpretation, and use of the park and provide access to resources that bring it to life.

COMMON FEATURES OF ALL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

All of the management options embrace some common elements that, if adopted, would become operative. Regardless of the option chosen, the following attributes and implications would, in part, characterize it.

- 1 Gateway/Access Area
- 2 Contemporary Waterfront/Maritime Area
- 3 Historic District/Commercial Area
- 4 Historic District/Domestic Area



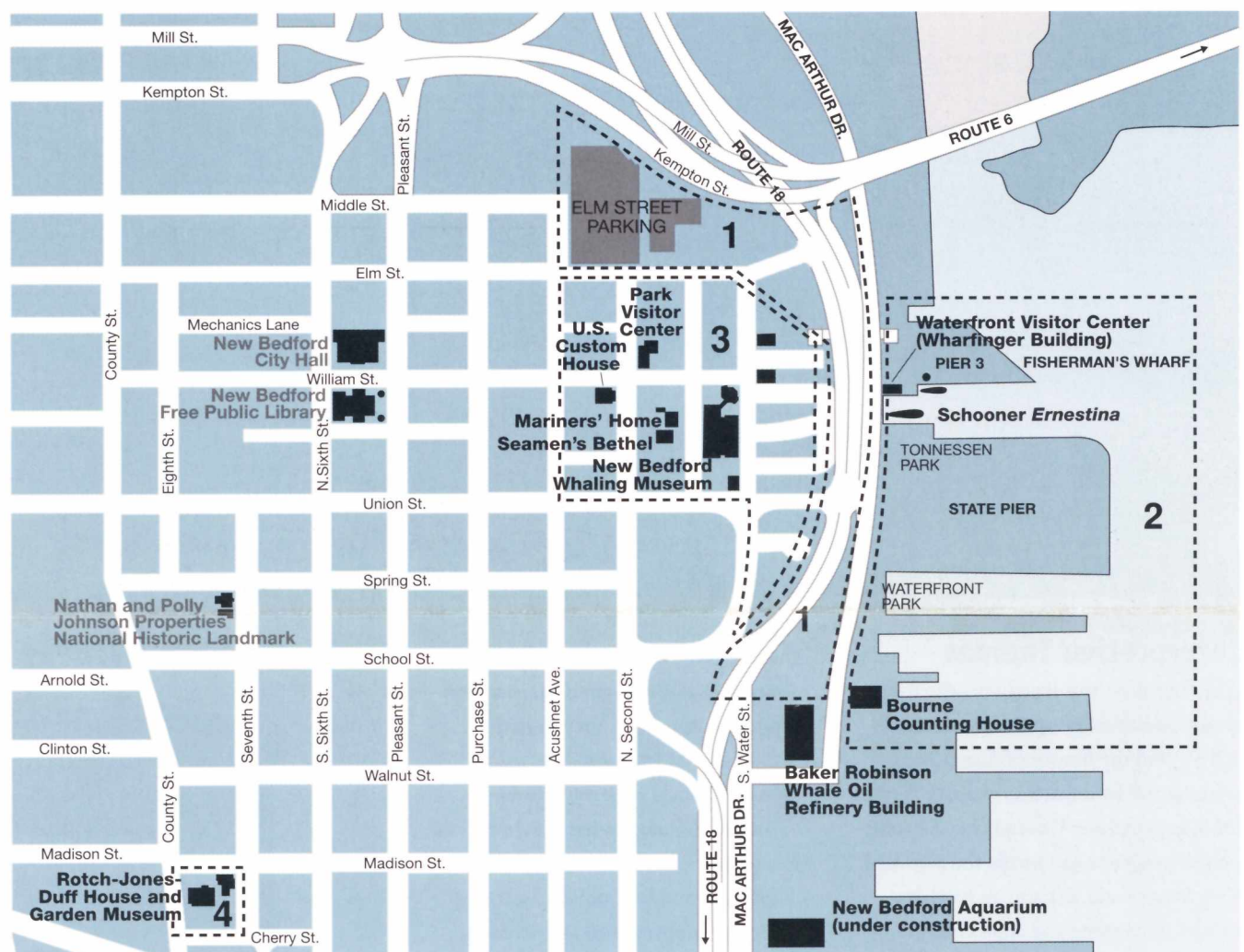
Visitor Experience Areas

1 The **gateway/access area** would be the park's primary entryway via Route 18 and Elm Street.

2 The **contemporary waterfront/maritime area** would offer visitors opportunities to observe and learn about actual industrial waterfront activities—the fishing industry, life at sea, and maritime arts—either through hands-on experiences and demonstrations or through observation of real-life activities. It could also serve as a venue for concerts and community events.

3 The **historic district/commercial area** would focus on the history of whaling through interpretive activities and media, historic structures, and museums. It would be the setting for small-scale events and shopping and dining options. Since this area is best explored on foot, pedestrian use would be emphasized.

4 The **historic/domestic area** would help visitors learn about domestic life in New Bedford and the finance of whaling, primarily through museum experiences and neighborhood exploration. Small-scale events and interpretation of horticulture and gardening would be offered. This area has a peaceful and quiet residential character and would not support crowds comfortably.



NPS photos unless noted

John Robson

John Robson



The park's enabling legislation requires a 4:1 match of non-federal funds to federal dollars for visitor services projects undertaken through a cooperative agreement with the park. A 1:1 match for construction is stipulated. Donations of property, services, and goods qualify as the non-federal match.

To complement the mosaic of current and prospective park partners, the National Park Service encourages the creation of a friends group dedicated to park advocacy and fundraising for park projects.

THE THREE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Management Option 1—

Facilitating Stewardship: Under this alternative, essentially the status quo, the National Park Service would bring a national voice and visibility to New Bedford through its publications and facilitate coordination of park partners' visitor-services and resource-protection programs.

Management Option 2—

Fostering Stewardship: The National Park Service would share stewardship responsibility for resource protection with its partners and offer visitor programs complementary to partners' activities. NPS interpretive and educational activities would promote resource stewardship.

Management Option 2 is the NPS preferred alternative.

Management Option 3—

Leading Stewardship: The National Park Service would assume the lead role among park partners, exercising intensive and extensive involvement in resource preservation, collections management, and visitor programming.



New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park Visitor Center

Interpretation, Education, and Visitor Services

Throughout the park the National Park Service would provide leadership, staff support, and quality assurance to partners in interpretive and educational programming and media related to the park's mission. A parkwide comprehensive interpretive plan would be prepared collaboratively with partners. Wayfinding aids for visitors would be installed at strategic locations.

In the **historic district/commercial area** the NPS and its partners would co-sponsor park-related maritime demonstrations and other appropriate activities. The historic New Bedford Institution for Savings Building, the park's visitor orientation center, would be rehabilitated and made wheelchair-accessible.

In the **contemporary waterfront/maritime area** the NPS would support services and amenities proposed in the New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Master Plan.

The intersection of Elm Street and Route 18 would remain the primary **gateway/access area** for the park.

Resource Protection—Built Environment

The National Park Service would review all proposed projects that may affect park resources or the visitor experience. The plan would specify the criteria for NPS involvement in historic preservation in New Bedford, notably whether the property fits within both the 1760–1920 period of significance and the park's hierarchy of priorities for preservation of historic structures and landscapes. The NPS would also provide technical assistance on preservation and maintenance of the schooner *Ernestina*, which embodies several eras of maritime history, and encourage maintenance of all archeological resources related to the park.

Resource Protection—Collections Management

Except for items the NPS must retain under federal law, the park would not hold extensive collections of artifacts or archival documents. Prospective donations of materials would be referred to the appropriate local institution(s), six of which have noteworthy collections. The NPS would work with partners to prepare a park-related collections management plan that fosters coordination among partner institutions and addresses the priorities for collections management: *accessibility, climate-controlled storage facilities, and conservation needs*.

Resource Protection—Ethnography

The National Park Service would provide support for the generation of a series of ethnohistories. Each report would highlight the historic and contemporary relationship that a particular group of people has had with the city's waterfront and whaling history. A number of groups would be studied including American Indians, as well as immigrant communities from the Azores and Cape Verde.



U.S. Custom House



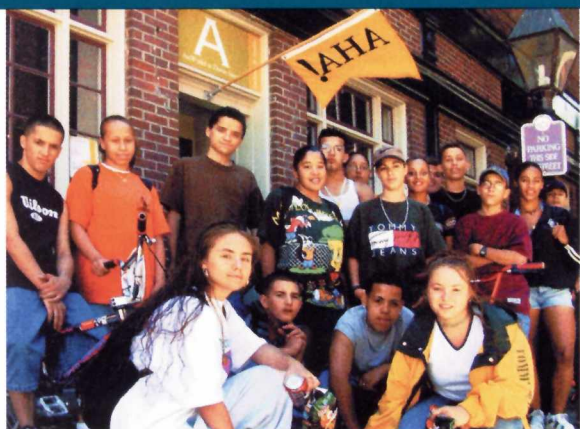
Centre Street

Park Operations and Administration

The old New Bedford Institution for Savings Building and the Custom House would house park administrative offices. The NPS would contract for its own maintenance services, and a friends group would be established to assist the park.

Parking, Circulation, and Access

The NPS would participate in the process to redesign Route 18 and provide pertinent technical assistance. The park staff would also work with the city and other partners to improve pedestrian access to the waterfront and to enhance and expand walking routes throughout the park. The existing wayfinding system would be updated.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS—THE PROPOSAL

The Management Proposal—Fostering Stewardship Management Option 2

The National Park Service's proposal for future management of New Bedford Whaling NHP—the preferred alternative—is to share responsibility with park partners for protecting park resources and providing visitor services by implementing management option 2. This model of proactive stewardship holds the best promise to fulfill the park's mission and to capitalize on the strengths and the sustained commitment of partner institutions. It offers the opportunity to preserve the authenticity of the city's historic core and waterfront and to rehabilitate sites now worn by past use, neglect, or compromises to their integrity. The synopsis that follows highlights its key features.

As in option 1, the NPS would take the story of New Bedford and American whaling to a national audience. The NPS and its partners would cooperatively identify and mutually adopt acceptable standards for historic preservation, collections management, and visitor programming. NPS interpretation, education, research, and technical training would emphasize activities that heighten public understanding of the park's values and kindle a stewardship ethic.

In **interpretation, education, and visitor services** the NPS would augment an existing assortment of activities and interpretive media and would continue to operate the visitor orientation center year-round. In the historic district/commercial area park rangers, in concert with partners, would deliver both regularly scheduled and special interpretive programs relevant to the park's mission and themes. They would help coordinate community-based activities and develop curriculum-based education programs. Visitors would have more direct contact with NPS rangers and volunteers, including two well-established volunteer groups the park inherited. Professional interpretive and educational staff would accommodate requests from partners for technical expertise.



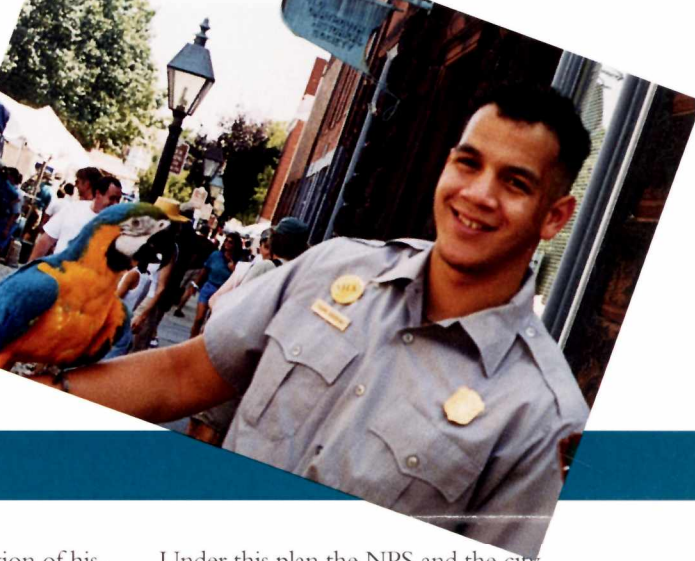
Baker-Robinson Whale Oil Refinery

At the Whaling Museum a free audiovisual program would introduce visitors to the park's primary theme of New Bedford's contribution to American whaling. The NPS would participate in its production. The museum's current interpretive offerings and special events would continue, as would those of other partner institutions, local organizations, and the city.

The NPS would also seek donation of a centrally located building in this district for community outreach and educational initiatives as well as additional office space. After renovation by the NPS, the flexible program space would be available to partners for park-related programs and activities.

On the waterfront the Wharfinger Building would remain under city management as a year-round visitor contact station. During peak season rangers and NPS volunteers would help staff the center, and the NPS would collaborate in preparing an exhibit for the facility and upgrading its restrooms. The NPS would also work with the private owners of the Bourne Counting House to allow partial public access and would develop an exhibit interpreting its use during the whaling era.

The southwest corner of State Pier and Waterfront Park would be a venue for park-related special events and demonstrations. The NPS would participate in water-based education programs relevant to park themes.



Nathan and Polly Johnson House

The National Park Service would seek a legislative change that would authorize the park to assist in the preservation and interpretation of the Baker-Robinson Whale Oil Refinery, considered essential to the park's mission. Few buildings of its kind remain in the United States. Interpretive wayside exhibits describing its history and use would be developed.

A similar legislative amendment for the Nathan and Polly Johnson House, Frederick Douglass' first New Bedford home after he escaped from slavery, in the historic/domestic district would also be pursued for the same purposes. It, too, would be deemed a mission-essential structure.

New Bedford organizations present an impressive array of curriculum-based education programs for school children and conduct teacher workshops. The NPS would support the continuation and further extension of these outreach efforts. In this management scenario the National Park Service would assume a more active role in park **resource protection** for historic buildings, landscapes, and museum collections. The park would offer partner organizations financial and technical assistance to acquire easements and undertake appropriate redevelopment of properties within the historic district. Planning and historic preservation professionals on the park staff would provide technical assistance and training in preservation, restoration, and maintenance to the city and other partners.

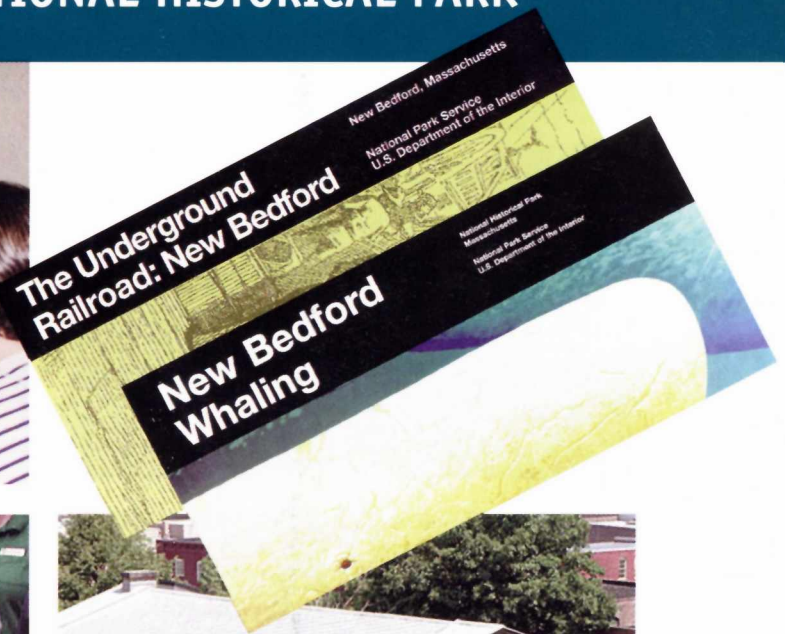
Under this alternative protection of historic structures, cultural landscapes, and viewsheds from adverse impacts would be strengthened. Park partners would have access to a more secure stream of funding and NPS technical assistance for preservation of historic resources. Public appreciation of the park's historic significance would be higher, leading to stronger stewardship and support.

The NPS would seek appointment to the city historical commission as a voting member and work with the city to have the national and local historic district boundaries expanded to coincide with the park boundary, thus enhancing protection of historic resources.

Similar to the role described for historic building and cultural landscape protection, the NPS would provide financial and technical assistance to partners in collections management. The park would encourage and participate in developing a universal finding aid to facilitate access to the park-related collections of all partner institutions. Technical assistance and limited funding would also be available to inventory and document selected, voluntarily offered private collections in the New Bedford area to assure their future protection. This alternative would generally improve the condition of collections and access to them.

Under this plan the NPS and the city of New Bedford would jointly pursue improvements in **parking, circulation, and access**, including visitor-friendly parking facilities, designated bus loading/unloading zones, expanded shuttle bus service, and intermodal transportation links to induce visitors to use transit alternatives to their private vehicles. Wheelchair accessibility at key park destinations would be improved, and the NPS would work with the city to correct accessibility deficiencies along historic district streets. Sign changes should also reduce traffic congestion downtown. Lessened traffic circulation would lower vehicle emissions and fuel consumption and enhance visitor safety.

This management option would require increases in NPS staffing and funding. It cannot be implemented without them. Annual operating costs for this proposal are estimated to be \$1.1 million. One-time costs required to implement it include an estimated \$600,000 for research, \$390,000 for planning, \$1 million for interpretive media, and \$7 million for construction.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS—THE ALTERNATIVES

Facilitating Stewardship (Status Quo)—Management Option 1

The National Park Service under this option would function essentially as it does now. Its primary role would be to give national visibility to New Bedford, principally through its signature publications. The National Park Service would work with partners to coordinate visitor services, education, and resource-protection programs and to expand and upgrade interpretive media, notably wayside exhibits and publications, that fit their sites into the context of a national historical park. A comprehensive interpretive plan would be collaboratively developed to promote coordination, cohesiveness, and quality control in partner programming.

The New Bedford Institution for Savings Building would remain the park's visitor orientation center. Staffed by volunteers and with new exhibits, the center would offer an introductory overview of the city's whaling history. Park rangers would present occasional programs, participate in park theme-based special events with partners, and assist in production of an audiovisual program. NPS services would remain at basic levels.

The waterfront would be the primary site for programs on cultural and maritime themes, and the southwest corner of State Pier would continue as a venue for special events offered by partners. The NPS would assist the city in developing an

exhibit for the Wharfinger Building on its historic use. The Bourne Counting House would remain in private ownership and commercial use.

The Volunteers-in-Parks program would be further nurtured with additional training, audits, evaluations, and mentoring. The role of volunteers would remain largely unchanged.

Historic preservation assistance from the NPS, including limited federal funds, would be available for research, design, and site-planning support. The National Park Service would assist the city and partners in protecting historic structures and landscapes and would seek appointment to the city historical commission as a non-voting, advisory member.

Current parking and circulation patterns, access options, and shuttle operations would remain fundamentally unchanged. The National Park Service would assist with some park-related directional-sign improvements. The shuttle would continue to provide public transportation from parking areas to downtown destinations and would be extended to the Rotch-Jones-Duff House during the peak season. Maintaining present conditions precludes opportunities to mitigate congestion and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts and to smooth traffic flow.

Under this option existing NPS office and program space, although inadequate to accommodate current park operations and visitor programs, would not be expanded. Staffing would remain at or near current levels. Some funding increases would nonetheless be needed, particularly when ownership of the old New Bedford Institution for Savings Building is transferred to the NPS.

No boundary change is proposed under this alternative, and consequently, no legislative initiatives are required.

Annual operating costs for this option are estimated to be \$610,000. One-time costs required to implement it include an estimated \$550,000 for research, \$110,000 for planning, \$580,000 for interpretive media, and \$2 million for construction.

Leading Stewardship—Management Option 3

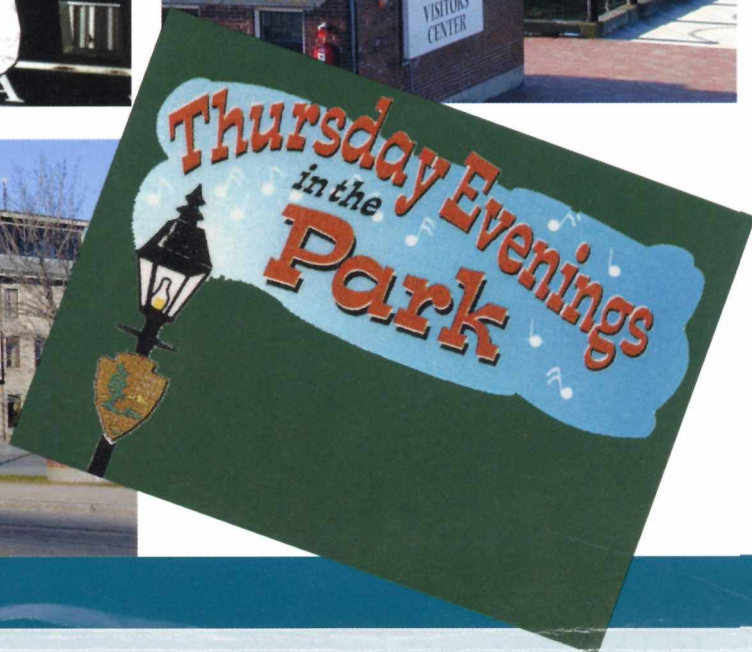
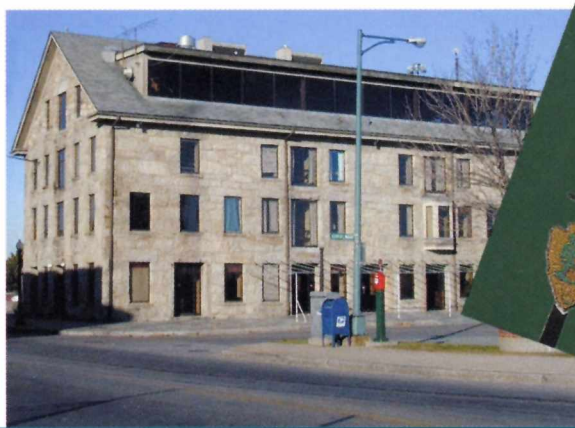
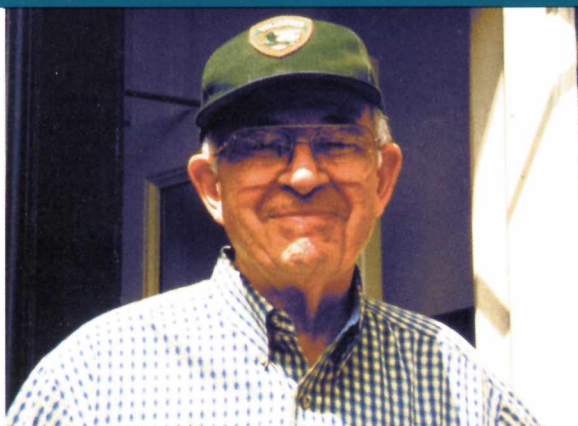
This alternative represents the most extensive NPS involvement. Positioning itself as the lead institution among the park partners, the NPS would assume a more direct and intensive role in resource preservation, collections management, and visitor services. In this scenario the National Park Service would have a substantially more visible presence, becoming the primary provider of visitor services in the park. Park rangers would lead

walking tours and develop curriculum-based education and community outreach programs in harmony with partners. They would augment the staff of partner institutions and present NPS interpretive programs year-round at their facilities. The role of park volunteers would change as rangers assume some of their current functions.

As in the management proposal (option 2), the New Bedford Whaling Museum would host an audiovisual program on New Bedford's whaling history that the park staff would help produce. The National Park Service would also acquire and rehabilitate a building in the historic district for community and educational outreach.

The National Park Service would coordinate all visitor orientation and information services in the park. Along with the visitor orientation center in the old New Bedford Institution for Savings Building, rangers would manage and staff the Wharfinger Building and program its use. The National Park Service would also seek the donation of the Bourne Counting House for rehabilitation and use as a waterfront interpretive center and would participate in the seasonal construction of a temporary structure on the southwest corner of State Pier for special events.

The legislative amendment described in the management proposal for the Baker-Robinson Whale Oil Refinery and the Nathan and Polly Johnson House would



be sought under this alternative as well. The change would enable the NPS to participate in their preservation and interpretation.

In its leadership capacity in historic preservation, the National Park Service would seek authority to acquire property interests, including at least one building in the historic district, and actively pursue donations of preservation easements. The local historic district boundary would be realigned to match the park boundary, which would be enlarged to include the west side of Acushnet Avenue between Union and Elm streets.

Additional staff professionals would provide extensive planning and design assistance to the city and park partners. A matching-grant fund for mission-essential buildings and landscape restoration and a special-act historical commission with expanded authorities to address cultural landscape issues, such as the proposed elimination of parking from exemplary streetscapes, would be established. The National Park Service would assume a voting seat on the new commission and provide staff to support its work.

Along with increased technical and financial assistance to protect park-related collections, the NPS would work with partners to develop a common collections storage facility and would be directly

responsible for managing the collections it must retain under federal law.

The National Park Service would work cooperatively with its partners to develop a visitor-friendly parking plan based on a comprehensive study, but would also promote limiting or prohibiting parking on noteworthy streetscapes. Shuttle bus service and intermodal transportation links would be expanded, and availability of NPS expertise and funding would accelerate wheelchair accessibility improvements.

The magnified level of NPS activity in this management option would require substantial increases in funding and staffing as well as additional office space. These needs would be at odds with the community-based partnership model that is the founding basis for New Bedford Whaling NHP.

Annual operating costs for this option are estimated to be \$1.8 million. One-time costs required to implement it include an estimated \$560,000 for research, \$390,000 for planning, \$1 million for interpretive media, and \$14 million for construction.

Why does the NPS favor the Management Proposal?

THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE, OR MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL, OFFERS MULTIPLE BENEFITS THAT FIT NEW BEDFORD WHALING NHP'S MISSION AND FULFILL ITS MANAGEMENT GOALS:

- It will achieve a cost-effective balance of public/private participation and investment in projects and activities that will perpetuate New Bedford's essential historic character and forge a diverse mix of enriching visitor services.
- It will preserve the authentic assets most representative of and significant to New Bedford's whaling history, including two neglected sites now outside the NPS's purview.
- It recognizes the value and contributions of park partners and amplifies their strengths. It can demonstrate a model of public/private cooperation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship to serve the public interest.
- It will expand interpretive and curriculum-based education opportunities using both NPS and park partner staffs and a strong corps of volunteers.

- It will bring manageable increases in visitation while improving visitor access and reducing traffic congestion at relatively nominal cost.
- It will build sustained community involvement that will solidify the long-term care and stewardship of park resources and facilitate a seamless visitor experience.
- It offers attractive economic benefits to the community and a reasonable cost:benefit ratio.
- It will help preserve New Bedford's maritime setting and complement the fishing-based economy.

The enterprise envisioned in this proposal would effectively merge New Bedford's 19th-century past with its 21st-century future. It would further invigorate the community's efforts to preserve its textured cultural heritage and to tell the story of its whaling legacy through activities and media that inform and enliven visitors' experiences. Blending National Park Service experience with partner empowerment and initiative would be a formula for success.

Summary of
Draft General Management Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

New Bedford, Massachusetts
September 2000



Northeast Region
Boston Support Office
New Bedford Whaling
National Historical Park

NEW BEDFORD WHALING
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



Acknowledgements: The New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park's draft general management plan was produced through the collaborative efforts of many individuals and organizations led by a team from the Planning and Legislative group of the National Park Service Boston Support Office. The following were key contributors: Edith Andrews, Peggy Albee, Christine Arato, Frank Barrows, Joan Beaubian, Arthur and Jean Bennett, Celeste Bernardo, Anne B. Brengle, Ronald H. Brower, Sr., Brown & Rowe, Michael Caldwell, Ellen Levin Carlson (Project Manager), Kevin Chu, City of New Bedford, Margi Coffin, Theresa Coish, Kate Corkum, Richard Crisson, Carl Cruz, Paul Cyr, Judy Downey, Patrick Eeley, Dr. C.W. Fairfax, Tina Furtado, Jennifer Gonsalves, Kathryn Grover, Jacquelyn Hallsmith, Candace Lee Heald, Ph.D., Janice Hodson, Ilisagvik College, Inupiat Heritage Center, Micheal Jehle, Candace Jenkins, Honorable Frederick M. Kalisz, Jr., David Kennedy, Larry Lowenthal, Bill Machurat, Edna Agheak MacLean, Ph.D., Mary Malloy, Cyd Martin, Len McKenzie, Arthur Motta, Jr., New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford Historical Society, New Bedford Port Society, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Laura Orleans, Sarah Peskin, John Piltzecker, Jeff Poyant, Douglas Rae, Patti Jo Rice, Ph.D., John Robson, Thomas E. Ross, Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum, Derek Santos, Schooner *Ernestina* Commission, John Scott, Antone G. Souza, Jr., Elsie Souza, Michelle Spink, Standard-Times, Monique Stylos, Gregg Swanzey, John Tauscher, Sarah Vance, Gay Vietzke, Sherry Wagner, Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE), Paul Weinbaum, Eileen Woodford, Claudia Sauermann Wu.

"A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feeling, viewed as a resource that sustains our humanity. The earth is a collection of places. It is always places we have known and recall. We are homesick for places. We are reminded of places. It is the sounds and smells and sights of places which haunt us and against which we often measure our present." From *Sense of Place: The Artist and the American Landscape*

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for New Bedford Whaling NHP is available for public review and comment until December 1, 2000. The planning process to date has involved many people who have contributed their ideas and insights. The National Park Service encourages and invites all interested individuals and organizations to sustain this pattern of citizen participation.

Copies of the draft document are available through the park.

Please call (508) 996-4095 to request a copy. You may also request a copy via email at nebe_superintendent@nps.gov or via U.S. Mail at the address below.

Please review the draft document and submit your oral or written comments by the deadline date. We need and welcome your response.

- Send your comments via U.S. Mail to:
Superintendent
New Bedford Whaling NHP
33 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

- Send your comments via e-mail to:
nebe_superintendent@nps.gov

Be sure your mailed comments are postmarked or your emailed comments transmitted no later than December 1, 2000. Please note that you must include your name and address; anonymous comments will not be considered.

The National Park Service will carefully review all comments and address them, as appropriate, in the final plan and EIS. After a 30-day period of no action, the NPS will prepare a record of decision

to document the selected alternative and complete the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. The approval signature of the Northeast Regional Director on the plan, probably in early 2001, will then open the door to an exciting future for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park.

Contact the superintendent's office at (508) 996-4095 or by fax at (508) 994-8922 for additional information.