FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Facilities Development Plan

Saint Croix Island International Historic Site

The National Park Service (NPS) proposes to create and implement a Facilities Development Plan (FDP) to guide facility development at Saint Croix Island International Historic Site (SACR) for the next 15 to 20 years.

Saint Croix Island International Historic Site commemorates the 1604 site of the first French attempt to colonize the territory called Acadia and the location of one of the earliest European settlements in North America. SACR is located on U.S.1, about 6 miles south of Calais, Maine, in the community of Red Beach, along the Saint Croix River, which flows between the United States and Canada. The site consists of Saint Croix Island, a 6.5-acre island in the Saint Croix River, and two mainland portions totaling 29.5 acres; one on the western shore of the Saint Croix River overlooking the island, while the other section is located nearby, on the other side (west) of U.S. 1. The FDP would direct the development of facilities on the mainland portion of the site adjacent to the river. In accordance with guidance from the SACR *General Management Plan* (NPS 1998), no facilities would be built on Saint Croix Island. The FDP will not address future use of the adjacent privately-owned parcels located within the site's authorized boundary.

An *Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect for the Draft Facilities Development Plan* (EA) (NPS 2009) was prepared and released to the public and regulatory agencies on January 5, 2009. The EA outlined four alternative facilities development strategies and analyzed the environmental effects associated with each alternative. In addition to the no action alternative (Alternative A), actions that were evaluated included leasing the McGlashan-Nickerson house (included in all action alternatives) along with Alternative B) building a ranger station adjacent to the parking circle and a new maintenance facility at the site of the maintenance shed, with housing for one seasonal employee in one of the new buildings; Alternative C) building a new ranger station adjacent to the parking circle and a new maintenance facility on the site of the Lane-Robb house on Saint Croix Drive, with housing for two seasonal employees incorporated into one or both new buildings; and Alternative D) the same as Alternative C but with no seasonal housing facilities provided on the site. Potentially affected impact topics identified during scoping and evaluated in the EA included soils, vegetation, historic structures, cultural landscapes, archeological resources, visitor use and experience, land use, park operations, human health and safety, and resource conservation, including energy and pollution prevention.

DECISION

The National Park Service is selecting Alternative C as described in the EA and will develop a FDP as outlined in that alternative in the EA. Therefore, the FDP will include constructing a new universally-accessible ranger station with indoor restrooms adjacent to the parking circle, building a new maintenance facility on the site of the Lane-Robb house, and leasing the

McGlashan-Nickerson house after other facilities are constructed and NPS operations have moved to the new facilities. Housing for up to two seasonal employees will be provided in one or both facilities. These actions will be completed in phases, as funding allows, beginning with the construction of a new ranger station.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT SELECTED

The No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, no new facilities would be constructed. The park's visitor services and administrative offices would continue to be provided in the McGlashan-Nickerson house. Maintenance and storage would continue to take place in the first floors of the McGlashan-Nickerson house garage and barn and in the shed nearby. No new housing would be constructed on-site. Structural deficiencies and health and safety issues in the McGlashan-Nickerson house would be addressed as operational funding became available. Additional NPS funding for extensive rehabilitation and preservation would be sought.

Alternative B

Alternative B included leasing the McGlashan-Nickerson house, building a 1,000- to 2,000 square-foot ranger station adjacent to the parking circle, and building a similarly-sized maintenance and storage building at the site of the current maintenance shed near the McGlashan-Nickerson house. Employee housing would be provided for one summer-season employee in either the ranger station or the maintenance building.

Alternative D

Alternative D included leasing the McGlashan-Nickerson house, building a 1,000- to 2,000 square-foot ranger station adjacent to the parking circle, and building a similarly-sized maintenance and storage building at the site of the Lane-Robb house. No employee housing would be provided at the park.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed by §101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This includes alternatives that:

1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;

2) ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;

3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;

4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;

5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and

6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

In essence, the environmentally preferred alternative would be the one(s) that "causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources."

Alternatives C and D equally meet the criteria for the environmentally preferred alternative, but in different ways. Both protect the historic resources of the site, including the McGlashan-Nickerson house and the Pettegrove-Livingstone house; provide for beneficial visitor use; and meet operational needs. Alternative C improves site security by providing on-site employee presence in housing throughout the summer, but in doing so takes the opportunity for rental revenue out of the community. Conversely, Alternative D would provide the opportunity for rental revenue to the local community, but would not provide for an employee presence after-hours and therefore might increase the risk of vandalism at the site compared to Alternative C. Alternative C was preferred by the NPS because seasonal rental housing has not been available in the local community and has adversely affected hiring of bilingual seasonal employees.

THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, from the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality that implement the provisions of NEPA, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

There are overall benefits to the human and natural environment at Saint Croix Island International Historic Site from the selected action. There will be beneficial effects on visitor experiences, park operations, and on the preservation of the historic McGlashan-Nickerson house, while protecting the site's natural and cultural resources, including archeological resources and cultural landscapes.

The selected alternative does not entail any significant adverse impacts to the human environment but will have moderate beneficial effects on visitors and park operations. Implementing the FDP will result in negligible or minor adverse impacts that will be localized and short-term. None of the impacts rise to the level of significance.

The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

When implementing the FDP, human health and safety will be the primary concern. Under the selected alternative, every precaution will be taken during construction of new facilities and the adverse effects to public health and safety will be negligible. Overall, implementing Alternative C will benefit human health and safety by addressing radon and lead issues in the McGlashan-Nickerson house, improving traffic flow near that structure, and improving public facilities, including an indoor waterborne restroom.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, and wetlands.

As described in the EA, the intent of the action alternatives is to provide the maximum amount of protection for the important natural and cultural resources of the park. After consultation with the federally recognized Maine tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), it has been determined that the implementation of the FDP will result in no significant adverse effects to cultural resources because mitigation measures will be accomplished to protect historic structures, cultural landscapes, and archeological resources. A letter from the SHPO is attached.

The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There were no controversial impacts identified during the analysis done for the EA, and no controversial issues were raised during the public review of the EA.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no identified risks associated with the selected alternative that are unique or unknown, nor are there effects associated with the selected alternative that are highly uncertain as identified during the analysis for the EA or during the public review of the EA.

The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The selected alternative does not establish a precedent for any future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent decisions about future considerations. The purpose of this action is to develop and implement a Facilities Development Plan that enhances visitor experiences and operational efficiency, while protecting the human environment, including natural and cultural resources.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The EA addressed cumulative impacts and determined that there would be no significant cumulative impacts associated with the preferred alternative.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Before its designation as an international historic site, Saint Croix Island National Monument was automatically listed on the National Register of Historic Places when the Historic Preservation Act of October 15, 1966, was enacted (16 USC 470, et seq.). However, National Register of Historic Places documentation was not prepared and no individual structures were mentioned as contributing to the significance of the site. In recent years, the National Park Service has been working in consultation with the SHPO to determine which resources are eligible for the National Register.

Cultural resources at the park are divided between Saint Croix Island and the mainland. A circa 1885 boat house and a 1904 memorial tablet are located on Saint Croix Island. Archeological resources on the island include features associated with the 1604 French settlement, traces of Native American occupation, and remnants of 19th century farming and coastal light station activities. No facilities development would occur on the island.

The mainland portion of the park includes the McGlashan-Nickerson house and the privately-owned Pettegrove-Livingstone house and garage, both of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. Landscape features associated with the McGlashan-Nickerson house include an apple orchard and garden. In addition, the Pettegrove-Livingstone property is also considered historically significant as a Downingesque landscape. There are also possible archeological remains of activities associated with 19th century granite and plaster industries, and a Native American site. Both the island and the mainland are of enduring cultural significance to the Wabanaki people, in particular, the Passamaquoddy, who continue to use these areas for ceremonial purposes to the present day.

The EA was written in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and it was determined by consultation with the federally recognized Maine tribes and the SHPO that developing and implementing the FDP will have no adverse effect to the cultural resources of the park. As stated above, a copy of that determination is attached.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that there are no threatened or endangered species found within or adjacent to the park, resulting in a determination that there will be no adverse impacts to any state or federally listed threatened or endangered species. A copy of that determination is attached.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The development and implementation of the FDP violates no applicable federal, state, or local environmental protection laws. All implementation actions will comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including the Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act and other core laws of the Maine Coastal Program. Correspondence from the US Army Corps of Engineers (regarding Clean Water Act compliance) and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (regarding Maine Natural Resources Protection Act compliance) are attached. A determination of consistency will be sought from the Maine Coastal Program as the FDP is implemented.

Impairment

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Service has determined that the selected alternative will not cause impairment to the critical resources and values of SACR. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the EA for the Draft Facilities Development Plan, public comment, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the direction in NPS *Management Policies 2006*. The selected alternative will result in negligible to minor localized short-term adverse impacts to vegetation, soils, archeological resources, and land use. Overall, the plan will result in minor to moderate long-term benefits to park resources and values, opportunities for their enjoyment, and park operations. Implementing the FDP will not result in impairment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public scoping meetings were held with stakeholders as outlined in the EA. The EA was made available for public review and comment during a 30-day period that began on January 5, 2009 and ended February 4, 2009. An article announcing its availability and inviting public comment was published in local papers, including: Bangor Daily News, on January 6, 2009 and February 2, 2009; The Quoddy Tides, January 9, 2009; Calais Advertiser, January 22, 2009; and The Saint Croix Courier, January 6, 2009. In addition, an advertisement soliciting public comment was published in the Calais Advertiser on January 22, 2009. Approximately 110 copies of the EA were mailed to interested persons and agencies, and the EA was made available for viewing or downloading from an NPS website. A public workshop was held on January 15, 2009, at the Washington County Community College, and was attended by 18 persons.

Twenty-one written comments on the plan were received; none rose to the level where an errata to the EA is necessary. All expressed support for the development of facilities at SACR. However, one noted that middle-class taxpayers are already financially stressed and urged waiting on development if funding was not already secured. Fifteen comments supported the NPS choosing Alternative C. No other alternatives were favored by any respondents. A summary of comments is attached.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The selected alternative will not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The selected alternative will not have a significant adverse effect on the human environment. Adverse environmental impacts that could occur are negligible or minor in intensity, and short term. There are no significant impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law. Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Approved: _____ 3/20/09

Dennis R. Reidenbach
Regional Director, Northeast Region
National Park Service

Date

REFERENCES

National Park Service. 1998. l'Ile Sainte-Croix – Saint Croix Island International Historic Site: General Management Plan. National Park Service Regional Office, Boston, MA.

_____. 2009. Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect for the Draft Facilities Management Plan, Saint Croix Island International Historic Site. Calais, Maine.

ATTACHMENTS

February 9, 2009 Memorandum to Superintendent and Interdisciplinary Planning Team – Summary of 21 Public Comments on the EA/AOE.

Agency Correspondence:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect for the Draft Facilities Management Plan, Saint Croix Island International Historic Site. National Park Service, Calais, Maine.