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Timucuan Today and Tomorrow

Number 1 ■ November 1990

A Newsletter from the National Park Service



This first issue of *Timucuan Today and Tomorrow* is your personal invitation to participate in the planning for the future of Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. Use the enclosed mailback response form to

record your comments concerning the preserve. It is our intent to initiate an ongoing, two-way exchange of information and ideas between the National Park Service and those interested in the preserve's future.



THE VISION

FOR TIMUCUAN



The preserve has two significant resources worthy of preservation and interpretation: an area that possesses a significant and

important cultural history, and a magnificent and dynamic wetland ecosystem. The area will be managed as the dynamic cultural/natural system that it is.

Historically, the lower St. Johns River has been a very significant resource. It was commonly believed that whoever controlled the lower St. Johns River controlled access to interior Florida; and later the back door to St. Augustine, the seat of political, military, and religious power of Spanish East Florida. This continuum of defense-related activity is evident today with the presence of the U.S. Navy's facility at Mayport.



The historic fortifications individually have specific importance, and when related to the bigger picture of European, and later American, occupation of Florida and the numerous struggles to keep it, these forts become integral aspects of a historical continuum.

Although the 35,000 acres that currently encompass the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve do not constitute the entire wetlands ecosystem of the St. Johns River, their designation by the Congress as a preserve, coupled with the recent rise in American consciousness towards preservation and protection of wetlands, makes them a valuable natural resource. Visitors will have opportunities to learn and experience the natural resources of the preserve, which will help make clear the experiences of those who fought, settled, lived, and continue to live here.



DESIGNATION OF PRESERVE

The National Park Service was created by an act of Congress on August 25, 1916, "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." In the early years there were only a few parks, actually vast undeveloped areas, mostly in the West. Now there are more than 350 separate units in the national park system, including natural areas, such as Everglades National Park; military parks, such as Fort Caroline National Memorial; urban recreation areas; homes of presidents; wild and scenic rivers; and preserves. Each unit is planned individually to address its unique attributes, purposes, and needs.

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve was established by Public Law 100-249, dated February 16, 1988. The legislation was authored by Congressman Charles E. Bennett. Located entirely within Jacksonville and Duval County, Florida, the preserve roughly encompasses the salt marsh area between the St. Johns and Nassau rivers. The preserve was set aside to preserve certain historic and prehistoric sites and wetlands in the St. Johns River valley, Florida.

Fort Caroline National Memorial is part of and is located within the preserve and the city limits of Jacksonville. It was authorized on September 21, 1950, to commemorate the historic French settlement along the St. Johns River. The first confrontation between France and Spain for supremacy over territories within the continental United States took place on that site. The memorial functions as the

principal interpretive center and administrative facility for the preserve.

Within the preserve's boundaries are numerous properties or sites that are of significant historical interest. According to the legislation for the preserve, the secretary of the interior, with the consent of the owners, may acquire these properties or sites by donation or purchase with donated funds. The principal cultural resources are as follows:

Zephaniah Kingsley Plantation. This historic site is currently owned and operated by the state of Florida. It includes the main home and related outbuildings – including slave cabins – of this noteworthy planter who owned it from 1817 to 1840. Of the few remaining examples of the plantation system of territorial Florida, the site contains the oldest plantation house in the state.



Yellow Bluff Fort. This triangular earthwork, elevated on the north bank of the St. Johns River, was erected by Confederate forces in the summer of 1862 to prevent Union gunboats from



advancing downriver to Jacksonville. It is currently owned by the state of Florida.

Spanish-American War Battery. Located on St. Johns Bluff, this fortification was built during the summer of 1898 following the outbreak of war between Spain and the U.S. Only the concrete structure remains.

Thomas Creek Battlefield. This was the scene of the only Revolutionary War clash in Duval County. It occurred on May 17, 1777, between American colonial soldiers and a mixed force of British and loyal soldiers.

Fort St. George. Built during the 1730s by Georgia Gov. James Oglethorpe, its primary use was as a watch for Spanish activities. It also served as a visible claim for Great Britain's assertion that its southern boundary was the St. Johns River.

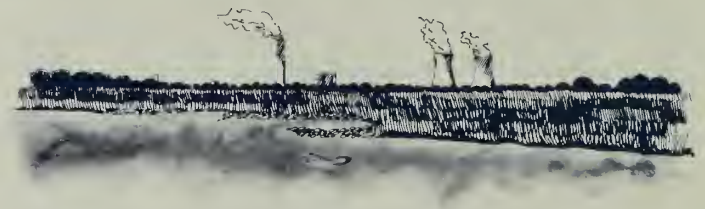
St. Johns Town. A British town built on St. Johns Bluff and known as St. Johns Town existed from 1763-1783. During the American Revolution, the town was occupied by many loyalists who fled the colonies. A British fort was built on top of St. Johns Bluff to protect the town.

Forts San Estaban and San Gabriel. These forts were built by the Spanish at the mouth of the St. Johns River as guard posts for Ft. San Mateo (Caroline) several miles downriver. Both were captured by Dominic de Gourgues' French forces in April 1568. Estaban was on the south side and Gabriel was on the north side of the inlet.

Fort Dos Hermanas. A gun battery was built by Spanish forces during the second Spanish Period (1784-1821) in Florida as protection against enemy ships entering the St. Johns River from the north via Two Sisters Creek (the present Intracoastal Waterway).

San Juan del Puerto. Established in 1578 by Franciscan friars, this mission site on Fort George Island contains cultural deposits from both Indian and Spanish occupations.

At this time only the precise locations of the Kingsley plantation, Yellow Bluff fort, Spanish-American War battery, and the San Juan del Puerto mission are known. Further historical and/or mapping research must be conducted to attempt to discover the remaining historic property locations.



The National Park Service has acquired the Theodore Roosevelt area and Burton Island. These two areas (described below) represent the current land base for the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve in addition to the Fort Caroline area.

Theodore Roosevelt Area. This area contains approximately 600 acres of mixed land cover consisting of mature hardwood hammocks, flatwoods, scrub, freshwater swamp, saltwater marsh, and highly productive mud flats that provide



important food for nearby active rookeries. Significant historic and prehistoric sites are contained within the sanctuary. Open daily 8 a.m. to dusk, the area offers hiking and biking trails, restroom and picnic facilities, as well as spectacular nature vistas. Natural and cultural history walks and talks are offered on a regular basis. The area is located along Mt. Pleasant Road approximately 1 mile east of Fort Caroline National Memorial.

Burton Island. This area represents a unique viable upland which is cut off from other lands by productive salt marshes. Lying just south of the Nassau River, the island stands 5 feet or more above the spartina salt marsh. Forest cover is predominately mixed hardwoods. The 110-acre island provides supporting habitat for a variety of birds and other wildlife that feed in the surrounding wetlands. The island is accessible by boat.



Of the preserve's 35,000 acres, 24,000 acres are in wetlands. The wetland landscape provides a variety of benefits for both the environment and the people of Jacksonville. The wetlands of Timucuan have a tremen-

dous biological value and are critical ecosystems for many of our planet's life-support systems. Until recently, wetlands were not thought to have much value. Now we know that wetlands are homes and nursery grounds for fish and wildlife. They store water, act as buffers for erosion during flooding, and serve as natural filters of pollutants. Wetlands are vital links in the natural ecosystems that affect almost every facet of our lives.



Wetlands offer unspoiled beauty and open space for people to enjoy. Visitors to the preserve can participate in many recreational activities, such as hiking, fishing, boating, photography, and environmental education. The early history of the St. Johns River and Jacksonville can be found in the wetlands, in the form of archeological evidence of the Timucuan Indians, and the presence of French, Spanish, and English soldiers and colonists.

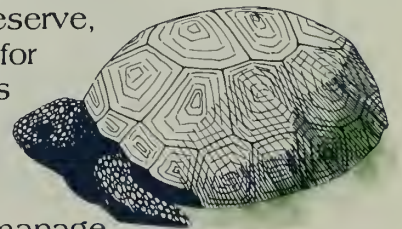
RESOURCE PRESERVATION AND VISITOR USE



The National Park Service has been directed to manage the preserve, protect the important natural, historic, and archeological resources, and at the same time allow the public to use it for recreation, such as boating and fishing. But we know we cannot do it alone, particularly within a major metropolitan area. We welcome your thoughts on ways of working in cooperation with other public and private groups to achieve the larger goal of keeping

Jacksonville and Duval County a great place in which to work and play and live.

Throughout the planning process for the preserve, we will be looking for opinions and ideas from you, the people of the Jacksonville area, on how best to manage the preserve to protect the significant values and to provide for public use and enjoyment.



PRODUCING A PLAN

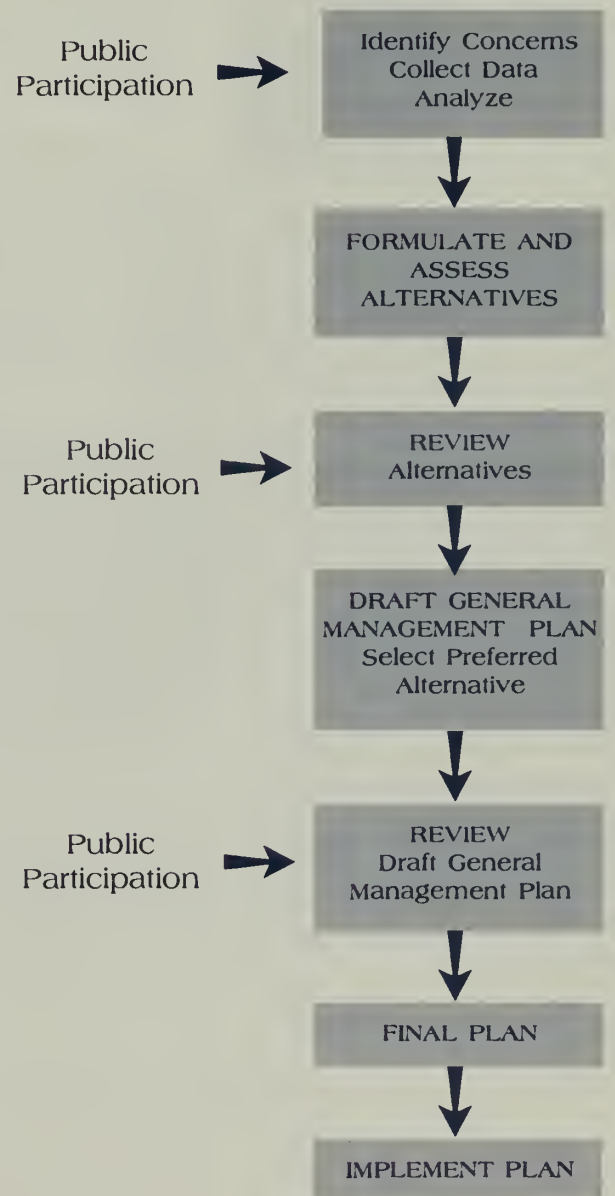
The National Park Service is required by law to develop a general management plan for each unit of the national park system to address current issues and identify alternatives for their resolution.

The plan for the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve will be prepared by an interdisciplinary planning team, including Superintendent Suzanne Lewis, members of the park staff, representatives of the National Park Service's Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta, and planners from the Park Service's national planning office in Denver, Colorado.

The team is in the early stage of the planning process (see diagram). Your comments on the mailback form and at public meetings in late winter or early spring 1991, along with data collected by the team, will be used to develop and assess alternatives for the management of the preserve. You will be invited to review these alternatives next year. The planning team will then prepare a draft general management plan and environmental assessment and select a preferred alternative. You will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft document. Upon completion of public review, a final plan will be published. The general management plan will guide resource management, visitor use, and development of the preserve for the next 10 to 15 years.

Your participation in this process is vital to the success of the project and the future of the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.

PLANNING PROCESS



A DREAM BECOMES REALITY

by Congressman Charles E. Bennett



For years, one of my most fervent dreams has been to protect the resources and to interpret the fascinating story of the lower St. Johns River valley and its tributaries. The beginning of that dream was realized in 1988 when the Congress established the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.

The preserve represents one of the richest and most productive environments on the North American continent. As such, it has been continually occupied for more than 5,000 years. Because of this long occupation, the preserve's cultural history is as rich and varied as its natural history. Tangible remains of its prehistoric occupants, most notably the Timucuan Indians, abound within the preserve as does evidence of its historic occupants – the French, the Spanish, the British, and Americans.

This rich prehistory and history is only part of the story, however, for a substantial portion of the preserve contains wetlands, a fragile and dynamic ecosystem. This magnificent resource continues to influence us, even today. Many of the commercial, recreational, and subsistence activities that take place within the boundaries of the preserve today occurred there historically. Present activities, coupled with evidences of the past, all within the confines of a significant natural environment, provide a special and unique opportunity to interpret a most fascinating story – one that the people of Jacksonville and Florida can be proud of, and one that all Americans will be eager to experience.

I ask each and every one of you to join with the National Park Service, the state of Florida, Duval County, the city of Jacksonville, and local property owners as we begin to define and shape the image and story of one of the newest jewels in the national park system.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles E. Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "C" and "B".

Public Response Form

Please comment below. When you are finished,
tear at perforation, fold the form so that the return
address shows, tape it, and drop it in the mail.
Postage is prepaid. Thank you.

Before receiving this newsletter, were you aware that Congress had created the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you know where it was? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Where do you live? ☐ Jacksonville ☐ Northern Florida ☐ Other

Comments: _____

How many times have you been to areas within the preserve?

☐ Never ☐ Once ☐ A few times ☐ Often

Comments: _____

Do you feel the preserve is easy to reach? _____

What kind of activities would you like to have available within the preserve? What programs or facilities might be needed to provide for those activities? _____

What do you feel are the most important resources in the preserve?

☐ historic sites ☐ recreational facilities ☐ Other

Comments: _____

The preserve contains several state, county, and city owned parks (e.g., Kingsley Plantation, Little Talbot Island State Park, Huguenot Memorial Park). Do you use these facilities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Which ones? _____

How often? _____

If you were going to spend a day in the preserve and could do anything you wanted, what would you like to do? _____

What is your greatest concern for the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve? _____

Other comments: _____

If you would like to be on our mailing list, please fill in the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Zip Code: _____

Individual or organization (circle one)

Thank you for your comments.

(fold here)

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Superintendent's corner

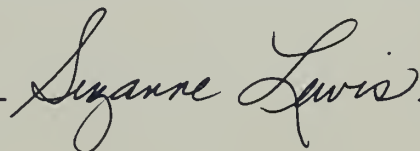
I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Suzanne Lewis, and I am superintendent of Fort Caroline National Memorial and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. I came to Jacksonville last May to assume management of the two areas.

The preserve is a brand new unit of the national park system. While I am facing new challenges and opportunities in managing and developing the preserve, those challenges and opportunities are also there for the long-term resident of the Jacksonville area. You can become involved in the preservation of this new preserve for your community.

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve includes a number of historic sites within a 35,000-acre wetlands area, and offers many opportunities for education, recreation, and preservation. The land is currently owned and managed by a number of different government agencies and private individuals.

Developing a plan for this area will be exciting and challenging. I would like to invite you to participate in this planning process. The first step is for you to take some time and fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me. After responses are compiled, the planning team will hold a series of public workshops to solicit further input and comments throughout the planning process.

If you have additional questions or comments, please feel free to call me at 904-641-7155 or stop by park headquarters at Fort Caroline.



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