

# STATE ♦ OF THE ♦ PARKS

*A Resource Assessment*



## ADAMS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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### STATE OF THE PARKS PARTNERS

#### The National Parks Conservation Association,

established in 1919, is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System by identifying problems and generating support to resolve them for present and future generations.

- 425,000+ members
- 8 regional offices
- 68,000 local activists



#### The National Trust for Historic Preservation,

chartered by Congress in 1949, is a private, nonprofit organization that fights to save historic buildings and the neighborhoods and landscapes they anchor. Through education and advocacy, the National Trust revitalizes communities across the country and challenges citizens to create sensible plans for a built environment.

- 275,000+ members
- 6 regional offices
- 20 historic sites



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## About the State of the Parks Program

The National Parks Conservation Association working in cooperation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation initiated the State of the Parks program to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. Through a series of reports, the program incorporates objective information to assess the condition of resources, forecast the future condition of those resources, and determine how well equipped the Park Service is to protect them—its “conservation capacity.”

This is the first time that such an assessment has been undertaken for the National Park System. As such, the approach is a work in progress. Comments on the program’s initial direction and methods are welcome.

The goal is to provide information to help policy-makers and the National Park Service improve conditions in our national parks and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations. Independent reviews indicate that a large part of the challenge to protecting park resources stems from a lack of scientific and scholarly information. Without sound information that can be used to identify problems and potential solutions, it is not like-

ly that funding and administrative policies will change. Adams National Historical Park, the subject of this report, preserves the homes and grounds of one of the country’s most distinguished families, and it exemplifies the pressures and problems facing many of the national treasures that comprise the National Park System.

To determine how this park, as well as others, is doing, the National Parks Conservation Association asked the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory at Colorado State University to develop an assessment process that would help to evaluate the condition of resources in various national parks across the country.

At Adams National Historical Park, the assessment found that personnel have made considerable progress toward preserving the park’s resources, yet significant challenges remain. Visitation continues to escalate dramatically—nearly doubling in the last five years—with little increase in staff and little understanding of how this increase affects historic buildings. A commercial storefront, a distance from the historic sites, serves as the visitor center and does not adequately prepare visitors for the park. More than 22,000 archival items, mostly family papers, have not been classified or catalogued. They remain in storage and inaccessible to researchers. The small, but highly motivated team of staff members at Adams does not include a pro-

### EVALUATION OF CONDITIONS at ADAMS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Category	Current conditions and Forecast (scale of 0 to 100)	
<b>Overall cultural resource conditions</b>	<b>72</b>	↔
Historic structures	80	↔
Collections and archives	64	↓
Cultural landscapes	60	↔
Archaeological sites	100	↔
Ethnography	66	↔
<b>Overall natural resource conditions</b>	<b>64</b>	↔
Native biodiversity	50	↔
Terrestrial communities and systems	78	↔
<b>Conservation capacity</b>	<b>60</b>	(scale 0 to 100)

*The State of the Parks rated current conditions in Adams National Historical Park and forecasted likely future conditions. Sideways arrows in the forecast column indicate no major change over the next ten years. Downward arrows indicate likely deterioration of conditions.*



**The 18th century formal garden at the Old House, home to four generations of the Adams family. The house is preserved in much the same condition that prevailed in 1927, when the Adams Memorial Society took over management of the site.**

fessional curator to identify or catalog these papers, a historian to document the collections' significance, enough interpreters to guide visitors through the park, or a law enforcement officer to safeguard the park's priceless collections.

The assessment found that on a scale of 0 to 100, the condition of Adams' known cultural resources rates 72, while the condition of known natural resources rates 64. Although the park's ratings are fairly high, the forecast indicates that if current administrative policies and management practices prevail over the next ten years and threats are not addressed, at least one of the park's cultural resources will likely deteriorate. At particular risk are the park's collections and archives, which, along with the historic structures, are its mainstay.

This report recommends a number of steps to improve the condition of cultural and natural resources at the park. The primary recommendations emphasize the need to hire additional staff, including a professional curator and historian, and the need to finish cataloging and classifying the collections and papers at the park.

The recommendations require additional funding and a shift in current administrative and management priorities. If carried out, they will help ensure that the treasures of Adams National Historical Park remain to teach us much about this nation.

## Summary

More than a century ago, Congress established Yellowstone as the world's first national park. That single act was the beginning of a remarkable and ongoing effort to protect this nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage.

But over the years, Americans have learned that designation of national parks does not automatically ensure the well being of the resources the parks are meant to protect and the history they represent. Only a small part—usually less than 10 percent—of the National Park Service budget each year is earmarked for management of natural, historical, and cultural resources. And in most years, only about 7 percent of permanent park employees work in jobs directly related to preserving park resources. Many parks are threatened by incompatible development of adjacent lands, air and water pollution, skyrocketing visitation, and rapid increases in motorized recreation such as snowmobiling. Historic structures suffer from deterioration; nearly half of park collection storage facilities do not meet professional museum standards for preservation; and most cultural landscapes have yet to be adequately inventoried so that in many cases, we don't know precisely what we have.

Adams National Historical Park in Quincy, Massachusetts, is one of the most extraordinary surprises in the National Park System. Its 22 historic structures, some of which date back to the early 1700s, occupy a singular place in the history of the United States. They bring to life the history of our founding democratic principles and introduce visitors to one of this country's most distinguished families.

Together, the structures, collections, and cultural landscapes in the park weave a tale of the Adamses' strong belief in God, country, family, and the value of education for men and women. This remarkable park is a tribute to those values and the family that extolled them.

Two U.S. presidents, John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams; two first ladies, Abigail Adams and Louisa Catherine Adams; and noted diplomat Charles Francis Adams—proudly carried the family name. Their statecraft and intellectual pursuits contributed to the birth of this nation and beyond. Visitors to the park can trace the family from colonial times and the revolutionary era through the early part of the 20th century.

The historic site is in the city of Quincy, just ten miles from downtown Boston. Once in a pastoral setting, the buildings and grounds of the park are now in distinctly urban surroundings. The park faces many problems and pressures that threaten its resources, including inadequate storage space for the estimated 87,300 items in the collections and archives, potential theft, and day-to-day wear and tear associated with use by Park Service employees and visitors. All of these factors are exacting a toll.

# I. A Place of Greatness

Adams National Historical Park is the only place in the country where the stories of two presidents can be told from birth to death. Today, we can still sense the presence of these men, their forebears, spouses, and descendants through visits to the Adamses' homes and gardens.

The 22 structures located on the three properties in the park—the Old House, the birthplace houses, and the Beale Estate—transport us back in time. We are reminded of when John Adams, our first vice president and second president, and his contemporaries captured the essence of colonial patriotism and fashioned the political doctrines that guide the United States to this day. The park teaches us about the courageous stand that John Quincy Adams, our sixth president and a staunch abolitionist, took in a courtroom to defend the Mendi people, who were abducted from Africa, sold to planters in Cuba, and later mutinied aboard the slave ship *Amistad*.

John Adams was born in one of the two saltbox houses in the park, and his son John Quincy was born in the other, just 75 feet away. These structures are the earliest surviving presidential birthplaces in the country.

Both men were initially schooled in these houses—John Quincy by his mother Abigail, who imparted to all of her children her strong abolitionist views and sense of fairness. In the house where their son was born, John Adams drafted the Massachusetts' constitution, which served as a model for the country, and Abigail penned many of her famous letters during the Revolutionary War.

Nearby is the imposing Old House, home to four generations of Adamses and called "Peacefield," by John Adams. It is preserved in much the same condition that

*The purpose of Adams National Historical Park is to "preserve for public use the sites associated with the Adams family including the house and grounds of four generations of this great family, as well as the birthplaces of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams; and to stimulate an appreciation of the Adams family, which by its dedication to public service and its contributions in the field of literature, has so strongly influenced the course of our nation."*

prevailed when the Adams Memorial Society took over management of the home in 1927. The Old House became a national historic site in 1946.

Adjacent to the Old House is the Stone Library built in 1870 by Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams. Like his father and grandfather, Charles Francis served his country abroad as a diplomat. He also compiled and edited the papers of his father and grandfather and the letters of Abigail and John Adams. The library still serves its original purpose, acting as a repository for the priceless 14,000-volume collection of books that the family amassed.

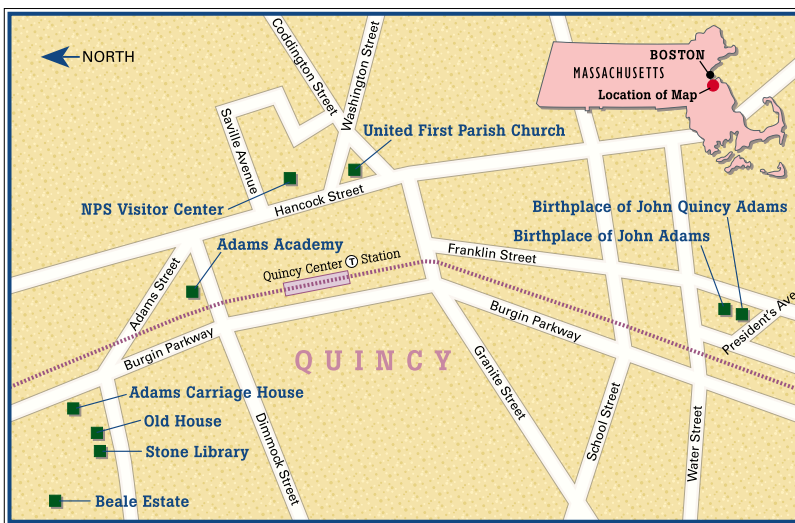
The United First Parish Church, a National Historic Landmark, was included within the park's boundaries by legislation passed in 1980 but is owned by the congregation. The church contains the Adams family crypt where the bodies of the two presidents and their wives are entombed.

John Adams established the Temple and School Fund in 1822 to construct the church, built of Quincy granite, and replace the wooden church presided over by the Reverend John Hancock during Adams' boyhood. Hancock was the father of Adams' friend John Hancock,

who boldly signed the Declaration of Independence. The United First Parish congregation, initially formed in 1639, strongly advocated freedom of religion. These teachings had a notable influence on John Adams and his successors.

In all three homes and the library, visitors are treated to historical furnishings, fine art, memorabilia, and collectibles that tell the story of this extraordinary family from the 18th to the 20th centuries. From the original wallpaper that still exists on some of the walls to the dinnerware, paintings, and light fixtures, we learn of changes in style and technology over 200 years of occupation by the Adams family.

The estimated 87,300 items in the col-



Shortly after his father's death in 1826, John Quincy Adams found himself wandering the halls and rooms of the family home. As one of his biographers, Marie Hecht, observed: "At the Adams mansion everything seemed the same to the president until he entered his father's bedroom, where he had sat with him on the last two visits. 'My father and mother have departed,' he thought. 'The charm which has always made this house to me an abode of enchantment is dissolved; and yet my attachment to it, and to the whole region round is stronger than I ever felt before.'"



John Q. Adams



Abigail Adams

lections and archives of Adams National Historical Park include the Mendi Bible, given to John Quincy Adams by a grateful people, and archaeological findings that testify to occupation of the site by American Indians long before European colonization.

The park preserves three cultural landscapes—the birthplaces, Old House, and Beale Estate. The Park Service is obliged to maintain conditions similar to those of 1927. At present, the Old House landscape is the most intact.

Significant flower gardens and orchards from the times when the Adams family lived on the premises are still found in the park. Beginning with the heirloom plants brought to Quincy by Abigail Adams in the 18th century, the gardens tell a story of changing tastes in landscaping. The park's orchards have earned recognition as an outstanding example of a historic orchard in the National Park Service's Northeast Region. Highlights of the formal garden include the sweet bay magnolia that is listed as a threatened species by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a York rose bush transported from England by Abigail Adams in 1788, and a yellowwood tree that may have been planted by Louisa Catherine Adams.



John Adams



John Adams purchased the Old House when he retired from public life; however, many of his subsequent letters and ideas were developed in the home. John Quincy Adams retired to this home as well.

## II. The Adams Assessment

The diverse resources of Adams National Historical Park represent a profoundly rich historical and cultural tradition. But this place where greatness was born and nurtured has changed considerably over the years. The presidential birthplaces, Old House, Stone Library, carriage house, and gardens that were once the center of a rural landscape have been absorbed by urban development. City streets now crowd the facades of the houses. The rumbling of trains on nearby mass transit rails weakens the foundations of park structures. Air and noise pollution threaten some park resources and the visitor experience. To determine how well the park is doing, the National Parks Conservation Association asked Colorado State University's Natural Resource Laboratory to develop an assessment to look at current resource conditions, conditions for the next ten years, and the Park Service's ability to care for the resources. In total, information was collected for more than 80 indicators that fall into 17 critical categories. While the State of the Parks program gives separate ratings to cultural and natural resources, it is understood that the Park Service must manage these two elements as a whole.

### CULTURAL RESOURCE CONDITIONS

- Historic Structures
- Collections and Archives
- Cultural Landscapes
- Archaeological Sites
- Ethnography

### NATURAL RESOURCE CONDITIONS

- Native Biodiversity
- Terrestrial Communities and Systems
- Aquatic Communities and Systems
- Marine Communities and Systems

### CONSERVATION CAPACITY

- Funding
- Staffing
- Park Planning
- Research
- Volunteers
- Partnerships
- Support Groups
- Community Support



**With 14,000 volumes, the library attests to the family's interest in an array of topics. It is considered to be the nation's first presidential library.**

Not all of the categories apply to each national park. At Adams National Historical Park, aquatic and marine communities and systems were not considered in the overall rating. And some of the categories carry more weight than others. Historic structures and collections and archives—the essence of Adams National Historical Park—accounted for 70 percent of the overall rating for cultural resource conditions.

For each category, a series of “indicators”—essentially questions pertinent to the condition of the resources in the category—are used to elicit data. Information is also collected about the stresses and threats that have negative impacts on park resources. These include invasive non-native species, pollution, altered natural processes, adjacent land use and boundary issues, climate change, and other park threats.

Additional indicators include storage facilities, vulnerability to vandalism and theft, and level of maintenance. The research also looks at whether a park has identified the number of visitors that a park's resources can safely accommodate.

The information from the indicators is used to rate the current condition of park resources and then used to forecast resource conditions. For more on the assessment process and rating system, see the appendix.

### RESOURCE CONDITIONS AND FORECASTS

Current resource conditions at Adams National Historical Park were rated on a 100-point scale. The park received a 72 rating for cultural resources and a 64 rating for natural resources. The forecast predicts that the park's collections and archives will likely deteriorate over the next ten years if current funding, administrative policies, and management practices prevail.

**1. CULTURAL RESOURCES.** Included in cultural resources are: historic structures, collections and archives, cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, and ethnography.

## HISTORIC STRUCTURES

**Current conditions = 80**

*(35 percent of overall rating for cultural resources)*



All human constructions that exist at Adams National Historical Park are considered historic structures. There are 22 of them, ranging from a stone wall and fence post to a small woodshed and the historic homes and Stone Library. All of the historically important buildings at the park are structurally sound except the Beale carriage house.

The Park Service has assessed the overall condition of all park structures. Fourteen are considered to be in good condition, five in fair condition and three—the Adams carriage house, the Beale carriage house, and the wall and fence on the Beale Estate—in poor condition.

### Forecast

To its credit, the Park Service has determined the condition of all historic structures and evaluated some for their historic significance. The staff has also managed the structures in a manner consistent with their historical importance.

Six of the structures (the Old House, Adams carriage house, Old House woodshed, both birthplace homes, and the birthplace stone wall) are severely threatened by natural deterioration, increased visitation, vibrations from nearby mass transit and freight trains, and air pollution.

Additional work is needed to ascertain the precise nature of threats to all of the park's historic structures. That information could serve as a baseline to guide future management. In particular, the Park Service needs to determine the impact that visitors have on the structures and use that information to devise visitor management strategies. Visitation, which saw an 88 percent increase since 1995, continues to climb.

## COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

**Current conditions = 64**

*(35 percent of overall rating for cultural resources)*



The estimated 87,300 items in the collections and archives at Adams National Historical Park range from furnishings, decorative arts, and personal objects to historical administrative records, photographs, scrapbooks, manuscripts, and books. All of these items tell a part of the Adams' family story. The vast majority of historical items are on display, including 14,000 volumes in the magnificent Stone Library.

The items are classified as archaeological (39,000 items), historical (24,283 items) and archival (24,000 items). An additional 22,000 items, now in storage, have yet to be classified. The ratings did not take these into account, although they are probably the most vulnerable. All of the archaeological items and about 88 percent of the historical items—but just 20 percent of the archival items—have been catalogued. Most important, the uncatalogued items in storage contain the historically significant family papers that teach us much about the Adamses' values and beliefs and may be the resource most at risk.

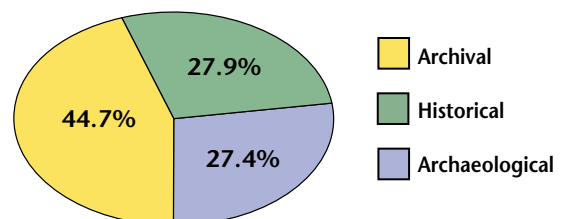
The Park Service estimates that about 2,600 archaeological, historical, and archival items are in excellent condition, 28,700 are in good condition, 42,000 are in fair condition, and 13,900 are in poor condition.

Researchers found that poor storage, lack of additional exhibit facilities, and increased visitation are affecting the items in the collections. Researchers also noted the very large discrepancy between the numbers of historical and archaeological items recorded by park personnel and the numbers recorded in the Park Service's national database for Adams. This discrepancy was caused by past reporting methods and is now being corrected.

### Forecast

As with historic structures, lack of information hinders the Park Service in protecting the priceless collections and archives at Adams National Historical Park. Efforts to finish cataloguing the collections and update the park's track-

### Collections and Archives Adams National Historical Park





ing system, identify storage, and assess the collections' condition are hampered by not enough staff or money.

Park personnel have requested help from the Park Service's Northeast Museum Services Center to complete cataloging the items. As of August 1, 2001, the center began working on about 11,000 of the archival items that had not been cataloged.

A new storage facility, to be completed in 2002, should improve storage and help prevent deterioration of stored items. But artifacts on display may well continue to suffer, especially from increased visitation. The escalating visitation increases the risk to historic objects, such as furnishings, resulting in further deterioration.

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

### Current conditions = 60

(15 percent of overall rating for cultural resources)



This assessment incorporated the National Park Service's definition of cultural landscape: "a geographic area, including cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals it contains, that is associated with a historic event, activity, or person or that exhibits other cultural or aesthetic values." The Park Service has identified three cultural landscapes in Adams National Historical Park—the birthplaces, the Old House, and the Beale Estate, which are also the three properties in the park.

The Park Service has assessed all three cultural landscapes. There are four levels of assessment, and the park has completed work for each type of assessment.

Findings indicate that the Old House cultural landscape (4.70 acres) is in good condition, while the Beale Estate landscape (3.68 acres) is in fair condition. The birthplaces landscape (0.72 acres), where plantings need to be replaced, is in poor condition.

### Forecast

The Old House (including the formal garden) is the most historically significant cultural landscape. The grounds reflect changes made by four generations of the Adams family, and the landscape has been well preserved to reflect its condition in 1927. In addition, the park staff has prevented the invasive California knotweed/bamboo rice plant from damaging the grounds.

However, the Beale Estate landscape needs maintenance, as do the grounds of the birthplaces. Plants need to be replaced on the birthplaces grounds.

Perhaps most important is that park personnel need to resume monitoring of the condition of plants in the gardens and landscapes as well as grow replacement plants. These steps are key to retain the historic conditions of the gardens and landscaping and maintain some of the heirloom plant varieties that have survived more than 200 years.

- *Adams National Historical Park—about 13 acres in size—is located in Quincy, Massachusetts, approximately ten miles south of Boston. Three properties are located in the park: the presidential birthplaces, the Old House, and the Beale Estate, which is the home site of a neighbor of John Adams.*
- *Brooks Adams, the youngest child of Charles Francis and Abigail Brooks Adams, created the Adams Memorial Society as part of his desire to establish the Old House as a museum. When he died in 1927, the Society—composed of members of the Adams family—took over management of the house and later donated the site and its collections to the people of the United States under the stewardship of the National Park Service.*
- *In 1946, Congress included the Old House in legislation designating the site as Adams Mansion National Historic Site. In 1952, the site was renamed Adams National Historic Site, and in 1978 the site was expanded to include the presidential birthplaces. In 1998, Congress designated the site as Adams National Historical Park, which included the Beale Estate.*
- *In 2000, the number of visits to the park reached a record number—88,758, an 88 percent increase in visitation since 1995 and more than quadruple the visitation in 1990.*
- *The park's operating budget for fiscal year 2000 was \$1,416,500. Funding supported various park projects, 12.5 permanent full-time equivalent staff positions and 14 seasonal staff positions.*



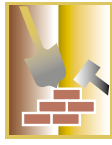
**All three houses at the site contain furnishings and objects that tell the story of this extraordinary family.**



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

**Current conditions = 100**

*(10 percent of overall rating for cultural resources)*



The park staff considers the Old House, the presidential birthplaces, and the Beale Estate to be individual archaeological sites. Artifacts recovered from all three date mostly from the 19th century, although a few prehistoric items (chipping debris, chipped stone tools, and some food remains) have also been unearthed.

The Park Service is obligated by federal law to test for archaeological remains before beginning new construction. Three such test surveys in the early 1980s were completed at the birthplaces' archaeological site. Artifacts were cataloged and stored in secure facilities. Once the surveys were complete, the site was covered. The unexplored portion of the site is intact.

The high rating is based on excavation of only one of three archaeological sites, and the one assessed is in good condition. Although the other two sites are being preserved, the condition is not known.

### **Forecast** ↔

Test pits unearthed 57 artifacts at the Old House and 888 artifacts at the Beale Estate, including most of the prehistoric remains found to date. The Park Service is not revealing their exact locations to prevent theft and destruction. But no studies or excavations are under way, and the Park Service does not have a survey plan or design.

Additional study may add to the understanding of past cultures in eastern Massachusetts, and recording the three sites would ensure that they continue to be protected.



**The birthplaces of John Adams (left) and John Quincy Adams (right).**

## ETHNOGRAPHY

**Current conditions = 66**

*(5 percent of overall rating for cultural resources)*



The primary purpose of the park is to protect and preserve stories and the related physical resources of four generations of the Adams family. The focus of this program at the park has been on relationships with Anglo-Americans, European-Americans, and European peoples.

The park has a long-standing and well-established relationship with the Adams family through the Adams Memorial Society, which was established by Brooks Adams in 1926. The society remains an active partner and advisor in preservation of the park.

Park personnel have also established a relationship with the Mendi people of West Africa, even though no evidence exists that any of the Mendi ever visited the Adams home site.

The park has not explored its relationship with American Indians who were once associated with the park area, as some of the archaeological findings indicate. The park has not attempted to develop ties with descendants of Adams family staff, such as servants, farmers, gardeners, and craftspeople.

### **Forecast** ↔

Ethnographic research at Adams National Historical Park, while not a priority of the park's mission, is important to identify cultural and natural resources linked to the broadest array of people associated with the history of the park. An ethnographic assessment that would determine whether traditional cultural sites exist within the park and consultations with tribes or other peoples with possible connections to the park, would serve the park and public well.



**The Mendi Bible**

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**2. NATURAL RESOURCES.** Included in natural resources are native biodiversity and terrestrial communities and systems. Although the park's grounds have a long history as a highly managed, cultivated landscape, preserving the remaining native species, their habitats, and the air and water on which they depend is vitally important to the health of an ecosystem. This is particularly important to the urban landscape that surrounds the park.

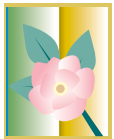
Aquatic and marine communities and systems, which are part of the State of the Parks assessment process, were not included in the assessment of Adams National Historical Park because they have little relevance to the park.

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## NATIVE BIODIVERSITY

### Current conditions = 50

*(50 percent of overall rating for natural resources)*



The assessment found 189 plant species in the park, only 31 (16 percent) of which are native.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts lists the native sweet bay magnolia as threatened. Among the other native species are bottlebrush buckeye, Douglas fir, chokecherry, highbrush blueberry, American elm, red and sugar maples, and white, pin, and northern red oaks.

In relation to vertebrates, some of the 38 native mammal species in Norfolk County appear to exist in the park. The park is along the Atlantic Flyway, and although many migratory birds may use Adams as a stopover, the park has not done a survey to identify which species feed, rest, or nest there, or whether any non-native vertebrate species live in the park.

The relatively low number of native plant and animal species results from deliberate planting of non-native plants in gardens and on the grounds and a long history of urbanization and its resultant pollution, not from park management practices. In fact, one of the park's management objectives is to preserve the grounds, including native and non-native species, in the same conditions that evolved throughout four generations of the Adams family occupancy of the site up to 1927.

Nevertheless, the possibility exists that rare native species, in addition to the few that are known, might be



**Abigail Adams transported this rose from York, England, more than 200 years ago. The Park Service is working to preserve the gardens and formal landscape as they evolved throughout four generations of the family.**

found in the park. Yet, the park's species list—estimated to be 90 percent complete for vascular plants—contains no non-vascular plants, vertebrates, or invertebrates because no inventories have been conducted.

### Forecast

Lack of information about native and non-native species makes it difficult to achieve management objectives related to conserving species diversity, especially when urban stresses such as acid precipitation and traffic noise are likely to affect some plant and bird species.

It was not until this assessment that the Park Service was informed that the sweet bay magnolia found in the park is on Massachusetts' list of threatened species. A complete inventory of species is needed to determine whether the park is serving as a refuge for other threatened or endangered species.

The National Park Service maintains regional Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units to help small parks such as Adams National Historical Park that lack natural resources staff. The units assist with long-term monitoring and provide current scientific information as well as information on land management practices that preserve native biodiversity. The units establish relationships with research entities such as universities to accomplish these goals.

The park stands to benefit from these services, but has not yet requested assistance.

## TERRESTRIAL COMMUNITIES AND SYSTEMS

**Current conditions = 78**

*(50 percent of overall rating for natural resources)*



The park grounds are a highly managed, cultivated landscape that has been deliberately planted with nonnative species and received irrigated water and fertilizers. Replacement of natural ecosystems with formal gardens, lawns, and orchards has disrupted native plant and animal communities both in the park and in the surrounding region. As examples, the park has no natural fire cycle, and the natural flow of ground and surface water has been severely altered.

In addition, because of its location, Adams National Historical Park experiences environmental stresses common to many large U.S. cities. The assessment showed that noise from the busy life around the park, while not specifically measured, may have an impact on animal species, especially birds.

Acid precipitation may be affecting heirloom plants and species in the park's orchard. The rainwater pH of 4.5 for this region is more acidic than estimated natural background levels. And the deposition levels of nitrate, ammonium, and sulfate, often associated with emissions of nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide and known to contribute to acid precipitation, are substantially higher than expected natural background levels for the region. The lower pH increases the risk of toxicity from heavy metals to plants and animals and may alter the natural nutrient and energy cycles. Plant species that once existed in the park and are now gone include American elm and chestnut trees, victims of the invasive non-native Dutch elm disease and chestnut blight, respectively. Nevertheless, this assessment found that the severity and geographic scope of damage to park resources from deliberate removal of native species, from invasive non-native diseases, and from sources of urban pollution are minimal and that some of the damage that has occurred is reversible.

### **Forecast** ↔

Urban pollution and noise will continue to degrade the park's terrestrial systems. Because of the park staff's focus on cultural resources, little information has been collected about these threats, and little has been done to develop remedies.

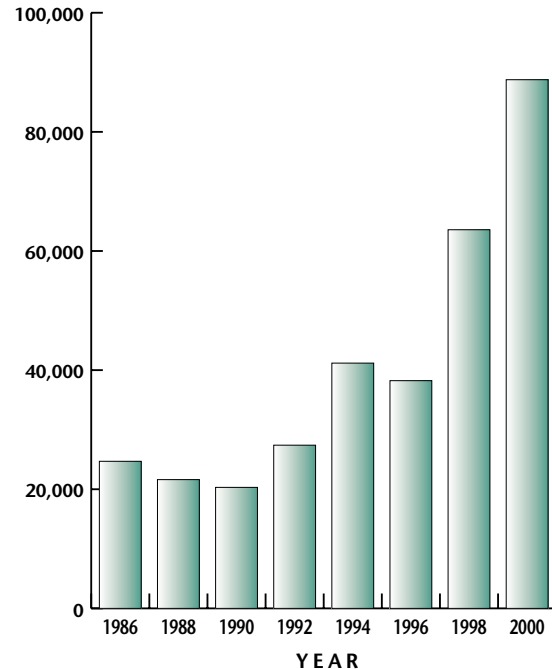
Research is needed on the effects of air and water pollution on the natural systems as well as the historic structures and cultural landscapes.

**3. CONSERVATION CAPACITY.** The third and final step in the overall assessment process considers "conservation capacity"—how well equipped the Park Service is to preserve the park's cultural and natural resources.

The underlying premise is that building strong conservation capacity will help abate critical threats to park resources. In turn, park personnel will have greater latitude to chart a course of optimal resource stewardship.

The following indicators were used to determine the park's conservation capacity: funding and staffing; park planning; research; volunteers, partnerships and support groups; and community support. Overall, the park's conservation capacity rated 60.

**Annual Visitation at Adams National Historical Park**



## FUNDING AND STAFFING

### Current conditions = 20



The park currently has a permanent staff of four full-time and two part-time administrators, two full-time curatorial positions, three full-time and three part-time interpretation positions and eight full-time maintenance positions. All of these positions are funded through an annual operating budget of slightly more than \$1.4 million. Fifteen seasonal staff positions supplement the permanent positions.

Despite the large number of historical treasures preserved in the park, no law enforcement personnel guards against theft or vandalism. The park has been unable to fill the curator's position for 2.5 years because of a lack of funding, which is astonishing considering that park personnel are responsible for 87,300 archival, historical, and archaeological items, the majority of which still need to be identified and catalogued.

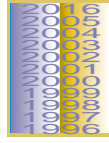
And park managers have indicated a need for resource management staff, including a historian and a museum specialist as well as site managers and park rangers to provide interpretive services for the increased numbers of visitors at the park.



**Both presidents and their wives are entombed in the United First Parish Church.**

## PARK PLANNING

### Current conditions = 60



The General Management Plan, which provides direction and philosophy for the park over a 20-year period, was completed in 1996. That is relatively recent compared with most other parks but because of a dramatic increase in the number of visitors the plan now requires an amendment. It correctly identifies many key problems, including the leased, temporary visitor center that is already too small to accommodate visitors and staff and is somewhat distant from the park's main buildings; the less-than-optimal curatorial facilities; and the importance of addressing external threats.

The plan has helped to guide progress, particularly to improve curatorial facilities. But it fails to provide a clear list of priorities for resource protection. Also absent, although not a specified mission of the park, is any discussion of natural resources contained on the site and the need to document and protect natural animals and plants. The park also could use exhibit space and an orientation video to give visitors an idea of what they would see at the park.

Specific follow-up strategies are needed to describe how park personnel intend to achieve the goals found in the plan. Both the 1986 "Scope of Collections Statement" and the 1993 "Collections Management Plan" should be updated to include the use of the new facilities and ensure that the park's enormous collections receive the protection they deserve.

To their credit, park personnel are finishing the Comprehensive Interpretive Plan, which was scheduled for review in July 2001.

## RESEARCH

### Current conditions = 60



Park personnel contributed their time and talent to assist historian David McCullough with research for his recently published book on John Adams. This research effort has done much to make the gold mine of information at the park on the Adams family and the history of our nation available to the public. Park staff have also completed a Historic Furnishings Plan Report in conjunction with the National Park Service Museum Service Center in Boston.

However, the park did not issue any research permits in 2000, which indicates a need to expand its efforts. The park should promote research on protection of park resources and of the historical significance of its buildings and collections.

## VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SUPPORT GROUPS

**Current conditions = 60**



The National Park Service alone cannot achieve park resource stewardship. Across the country, volunteers, formal partnerships, and park support groups are making enormous contributions to the ongoing work of the Park Service in protecting park resources.

In 2000, 30 volunteers—local Boy Scouts, heritage partners, and residents of Quincy—gave 1,839 hours of their time to Adams National Historical Park. They assisted with visitor services, special events, and Junior Rangers, a NPCA program that encourages youth to visit and understand the parks. The park’s small permanent staff has consistently managed an outstanding volunteer program. The survey of Quincy residents indicates that additional opportunities for volunteer recruitment exist. Training the volunteers remains a challenge for a limited staff.

Park personnel continue to work with the church and its board to resolve issues surrounding interpretive tours and ongoing restoration of United First Parish Church. The Adamses worshipped in the church, which is within the park’s boundaries, and it remains a critical part of the park’s story. John and John Quincy Adams, and their wives are entombed in the church’s basement crypt.

The National Park Service and the church should be encouraged to resolve issues related to the care of the building and its collections, an important legacy of the Adams home site. An opportunity was lost, for example, when the church recently sold for more than \$3 million the 11 ceremonial silver pieces that were fashioned by some of the earliest silversmiths in New England and that once belonged to Abigail Adams’ forebears, the Quincys. Some of that money has been used to finance a portion of the church’s restoration.



The Adams bedroom is decorated as it appeared during the 19th century.

Park personnel maintain important associations with the Adams Academy, which along with the United First Parish Church, was initially funded through the Temple and School Fund established by John Adams. Located outside park boundaries, the academy was built over the cellar of the house where the Reverend John Hancock lived. It opened in 1872 and during the next 38 years was a preparatory school for local youth. The building now houses the Quincy Historical Society and the society’s library and extensive collections and exhibits. The Park Service, Quincy Historical Society, and Adams Temple and School Fund should be encouraged to enter into a more formal partnership that includes a cooperative agreement. The park also has an ongoing relationship with the Massachusetts Historical Society to collaborate on special programs and historical research.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

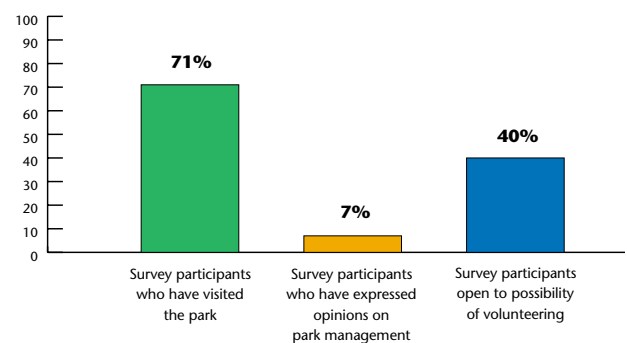
**Current conditions = 100**



The park superintendent has developed a close working relationship with the mayor of Quincy, Quincy Partnership, and members of the Quincy City Council that has provided vital support for the park and its mission.

To probe broader community views of Adams National Historical Park, a written questionnaire was given to a random sample of 200 Quincy residents. Just 7 percent said they had expressed opinions about park management in the preceding five years. But a respectable 71 percent of survey respondents said that they had visited the park and a significant number—40 percent—of respondents indicated they were open to the possibility of volunteering their time for the park. In addition, the park staff developed an educational program in 2001 that reached 22,000 students.

### Community Views of Adams National Historical Park



### III. Recommendations

Park personnel are striving to fulfill the park's mission and are making progress, despite a very limited budget, small staff, rapidly increasing visitation, and a number of external threats to the park's resources.

But if changes in funding, administrative policies, and management practices are not made, resource conditions may not improve over the next decade. Some resource conditions—particularly the collections and archives—will deteriorate.

The National Parks Conservation Association and National Trust for Historic Preservation recommend the following actions to help ensure that the cultural and natural resources of the park are protected into the future.

#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Hire or contract the services of a professional curator and cultural resources manager to manage the collections and archives.
- Hire or contract the services of a historian to determine historical significance of the large number of unclassified collections and archival items and organize archival documents and research materials.
- Hire three site managers to provide continuity and improve the quality of interpretation at the visitor center, the Old House, and the birthplaces.
- Update the “Scope of Collections Statement” and “Collections Management Plan” and finish cataloging the collections and—particularly—the archives, which are the most vulnerable.
- Complete reports to obtain comprehensive baseline data about the condition of the park's historic structures. These data are essential to design strategies that will anticipate threats to the integrity of the structures and lessen the impacts of those threats.
- Determine how many visitors is the optimum number (the “carrying capacity”) for the presidential birthplaces and Old House to ensure that visitation does not take a toll on these buildings and that visitors have a positive experience.
- Develop a monitoring and replacement program for the gardens, orchard, and general landscaping. These cultural landscapes are an integral part of the park with their own story, and they should not be allowed to deteriorate from historical conditions. In addition, the photography program that once documented changes in the cultural landscapes has lapsed and should be reestablished.

- Complete the Archaeological Overview and Assessment to create a better understanding of the scope of the park's archaeological resources.
- Expand ethnographic outreach efforts to encompass all peoples associated with the park and do research on who they are.

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

- Obtain the assistance of the regional Cooperative Ecosystem Study Unit to investigate potential research partnerships with educational institutions in the area. The objective should be to mitigate the effects of air and water pollution on the terrestrial communities and systems, cultural landscapes, and historic structures in the park. Management practices should be adjusted accordingly.

#### CONSERVATION CAPACITY

- Secure a permanent building close to the park to provide a visitor center and expanded office and exhibit space.
- Emphasize research activities related to resource protection.
- Strengthen the relationship with the congregation of the United First Parish Church to enable a collaborative approach to resource protection and interpretation and ensure public access.
- Develop a cooperative agreement with the owners and occupants of the Adams Academy. This should go far to enhance the educational benefits of the park.
- Expand recent attempts at recruiting and training volunteers to further stretch tight dollars, supplement the efforts of the small park staff, and build bridges with the community of Quincy.
- Continue to work in partnership with other historic sites within the city of Quincy.

These recommendations require changes in existing funding, administrative policies, and management priorities. They also require a commitment to resource protection from Congress and the public. The National Parks Conservation Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are convinced that the result will be an even more viable, living testament to four generations of one of the most important families in this country.

## APPENDIX: Assessment process

The National Parks Conservation Association and National Trust for Historic Preservation used information from a scientific evaluation at Adams National Historical Park to determine: the current condition of known resources, resource conditions for the next ten years, and the park's conservation capacity.

The Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory at Colorado State University developed the assessment process and collected data and analyzed it. For this report, researchers from the laboratory consulted staff at Adams National Historical Park and scholars in relevant scientific fields to develop comparable indicators for use in data collection. In total, data were collected for more than 80 indicators in the following categories.

### Cultural resources

- Historic structures
- Collections and archives
- Cultural landscapes
- Archaeological sites
- Ethnography

### Natural resources

- Native biodiversity
- Terrestrial communities and systems

### Stresses/threats that affect resource conditions

- Invasive species
- Pollution
- Altered natural processes
- Land use and boundary issues
- Climate change
- External park threats

### Conservation capacity

- Park planning
- Visitation
- Budget
- Staffing
- Significant partnerships
- Research
- Gateway community attitudes
- Volunteers

## DATA SOURCES FOR THIS REPORT\*

### Commonwealth of Massachusetts

- Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority
- Citizens and city government of Quincy, Massachusetts
- Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Historic Preservation Officer
- Geographic Information Systems department
- State Climatologist
- Threatened and Endangered Species program (Natural Heritage Program)

### U.S. Government

- Bureau of the Census
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Atmospheric Deposition Program/National Trends Network
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Park Service
- Adams National Historical Park personnel

\* Data from these sources were collected during visits to the park and from park publications, personal interviews, Internet resources, literature reviews, and a questionnaire mailed to a random sample of 200 residents of Quincy, Massachusetts.

After data were collected and entered into a centralized database, the researchers prepared a report that summarized the results of their assessment. The report underwent peer review and was also extensively reviewed by staff at Adams National Historical Park.

The report provided a draft framework for a comprehensive, credible, and scientific approach to assess the state of Adams National Historical Park and for other national parks across the country. Information generated through the assessment process will allow comparisons of park conditions or threats to park resources at national and regional scales (as examples, comparisons of conditions at all marine parks or an analysis of air pollution problems affecting parks in a particular region of the country). The process may also serve as the basis to monitor park resource conditions.



**Rating the parks.** In the final phase of the assessment process, the National Parks Conservation Association and National Trust for Historic Preservation devised a rating system that used most of the collected data to evaluate resource conditions, forecast how resources will fare over the next ten years and determine how conservation capacity may affect resource conditions. The scores stem from calculations, risk assessments, and questionnaires.

**Resource conditions.** In most cases, the scores for resource conditions were calculated from the weighted averages calculated by the National Park Service of the conditions of known resources. Terrestrial, aquatic, and marine communities and systems were evaluated based on documented damage to terrestrial, aquatic, and marine resources. Information from the Colorado State University report helped determine an estimate of the severity, geographic scope, and irreversibility of damage. This portion of the assessment process was patterned after The Nature Conservancy's site conservation planning model.

Each resource received a score on a 100-point scale shown in Section II. An overall average was calculated with different weight given to each resource based on a determination of the relative importance of the resource to the park. Currently, insufficient baseline data exist to determine whether a score of 100 is attainable for all of the resources at Adams National Historical Park.

**Resource forecast.** Indicators of stress and threats to resources and conservation capacity were applied across each cultural and natural resource to determine what their impacts would likely be over the next ten years. This approach enabled a comprehensive risk assessment that indicated whether further degradation (arrow pointing down), no change (arrow pointing sideways) or improvement (arrow pointing up) in resource conditions is expected.

The impact of external park threats (a conservation capacity indicator) was also used to evaluate how resource conditions may change as a result of threats outside the control of National Park Service staff.

**Conservation capacity.** Essentially, conservation capacity refers to the Park Service's ability to protect park resources. Indicators used to determine conservation capacity include factors such as funding, staffing, and the support of local communities.

A survey was developed and circulated among the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to assess the Park Service's ability to preserve resources at Adams National Historical Park based on the findings of this report. An overall average based on a 100-point scale was used to reach ratings as discussed in Section III.



**The Living Room of the Old House was used to entertain guests such as the Marquis de Lafayette who traveled from France to support the colonists' push for independence.**

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### State of the Parks Staff, National Parks

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The Carriage House was built by Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy, and has served as the park's administrative building. The park has had to use the historical structure because it had no funds for a modern facility.

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### Adams National Historical Park

Kelly Cobble, *Museum Specialist*

Eugene Gabriel, *Facility Manager*

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Marianne Peak, *Superintendent*

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