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U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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### Public Meeting to Review Fire Island National Seashore's Environmental Assessment for the Return of Fresnel Lens

*Patchogue, NY*— The National Park Service (NPS) announced today that the Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect (EA/AoE) that coincides with Fire Island National Seashore's plans to return the original first order Fresnel lens to the Fire Island Light Station will be available for public review. The project entails the construction of exhibit space to protect, display and interpret an original artifact associated with the Fire Island Lighthouse. According to Fire Island National Seashore's park superintendent, Mike Reynolds, a 30- day period of public review period is open through April 30, 2007.

A public meeting has also been scheduled for Sunday, April 15, 2007, to discuss any issues associated with the Seashore's plans. The meeting will be conducted from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Fire Island Lighthouse, located at the eastern end of Robert Moses Parkway on Fire Island. Parking is available at Robert Moses State Park Field 5, with a ¾ mile walk to the Keepers Quarters at the base of the historic lighthouse.

Several feasible alternatives were considered. Alternative B, which proposes to build a new compatible structure on the existing foundation of the Power Generation Building and move the Boat House to its 1939 location is the National Park Service's preferred alternative. This is also the environmentally preferred alternative. As part of the National Park Service's procedures to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, the Environmental Assessment /Assessment of Effect for this project is being made available for public review at the Fire Island Lighthouse, at park headquarters in Patchogue, and at the Babylon Public Library, West Islip Library, Bay Shore- Brightwaters Public Library, Sayville Library, Patchogue- Medford Library, South Country Library in Bellport, and the Mastics- Moriches- Shirley Community Library.

The document is also available on Fire Island National Seashore's website at:  
[http://www.nps.gov/fiis/parkmgmt/upload/EA\\_FresnellensBuilding\\_3-2007.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/fiis/parkmgmt/upload/EA_FresnellensBuilding_3-2007.pdf) (866 KB file)  
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The Fresnel lens—a 16- foot tall, beehive- shaped series of glass prisms designed to bend light into a narrow beam that can be seen by ocean- going vessels for miles—was constructed in France around 1857 and installed in 1858 under the direction of the Lighthouse Board in the newly built Fire Island Light Station tower.

The new 168- foot tall lighthouse was constructed near the site of the original 1826 Fire Island Lighthouse, which was only 78 feet tall and lighted by a series of 15- inch reflectors and oil lamps. The construction and installation were part of a national movement to improve the illumination of beacons throughout the United States. The Lighthouse Board had responded to numerous requests from shipping companies for improved beacons along the major shipping lanes into New York City Harbor. 1<sup>st</sup> Order Fresnel Lenses were part of a larger plan for higher towers with improved lights. This light, powered by a variety of oils during its tenure, was active until 1933.

In 1933, the Fresnel lens was removed from the Fire Island Lighthouse in anticipation of the Station becoming electrified from a mainland power source. The lens was disassembled, crated up, and moved to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The lens was incorporated into the Franklin’s permanent exhibit on Lighting and Optics. In 2000, the Franklin Institute removed the Fresnel lens from permanent exhibit and placed it into storage.

According to Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society President Tom Roberts, “We are very pleased that after several years of envisioning a permanent home for the Fire Island Light Station’s original lens, planning for this project to construct a building has finally begun.” In December 2006, the National Park Service signed a 10- year partnership agreement with the Society to continue the successful operation of the lighthouse. The FILPS will be the fundraising partner in implementing this plan, if approved. “We look forward to the next steps of the process, after all public comments are considered,” stated Roberts.

By April 30, 2007, comments on the project should be addressed to Superintendent Reynolds at Fire Island National Seashore Headquarters, 120 Laurel Street, Patchogue, NY 11772. You may also post comments electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Search through [Plans/Documents Open for Comment](#) for Fire Island National Seashore projects. *(Before including your address, phone number, e- mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment - including your personal identifying information - may be made publicly available at any time.)*

For more information about Fire Island National Seashore, visit the park’s web site at [www.nps.gov/fiis](http://www.nps.gov/fiis).

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