

Bureau of Mines/Coldwater Comment Card - 2/23/2009

Geographically, the Coldwater site sits about a mile up the Mississippi River from its confluence with the Minnesota River. Ecologically, the site lies at the transition from a riverine to an upland prairie environment. The site is valued for its relationship to historical events, including those associated with American Indian history. The site still contains remnants of features representing the time when Coldwater Spring served as the waterworks for Fort Snelling. Historic breakthroughs in mining and mine safety were discovered in the Bureau of Mines buildings currently on the site.

Protecting the site's history is a key aspect of the Section 106 process, under the National Historic Preservation Act. Consequently, we will be preparing a Programmatic Agreement that defines how different aspects of the site's history will be preserved or mitigated. We encourage your comments on how you think we could do this.

The Open Space/Park scenario of selected, preferred Alternative D, calls for the restoration of the majority of the site to an oak savanna, prairie landscape (also referred to as a natural condition). The spring would be restored to an appropriate condition based on existing regulatory policy, management agency guidance and public opinion.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please comment on the **elements**, **conditions**, and/or **character** you would like considered during the restoration. *The green sheet provides information on what it means to restore the site and what it means to restore the spring.*

Elements could include trails, parking areas, outdoor group gathering areas, interpretive signage, auto and bus access, restrooms, screening, landscaping, seating, etc.

Conditions could include hours of access, type of uses permitted with or without permits, use of motorized vehicles, how Coldwater Spring should be restored or treated, should parts of the buildings be left, etc.

Character relates to the look and feel of the site after redevelopment has occurred such as how natural the site appears, whether the site has a managed, park-like setting, how well the site blends or fits within its surrounding areas, whether the site appears contemplative and restful or active and busy, etc.

Please provide written comment below and on the back:

COMMENT DEADLINE: March 25, 2009

Instead of this comment card, you may also provide written comment

By sending your comments to:

Bureau of Mines/Coldwater Project
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
111 Kellogg Blvd. East, Suite 105
St. Paul, MN 55101

By emailing comments to: miss_info@nps.gov

By faxing comments to: 651-290-3214

Bureau of Mines/Coldwater Public Open House

What should I do at this meeting?

1. **First read the pink sheet**, “Who should manage the land?” There has been a lot of discussion about who will manage this site. It is important you understand that this meeting will be **not** focused on this issue tonight.
2. Meet with NPS and FWS staff at the tables set up.
 - NPS and FWS staff at the **Policy/Management** table will be able to explain the process to complete a final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Disposition of the Bureau of Mines Property. This includes public review of the Department of Interior’s identification of the preferred alternative.
 - NPS staff at the **Cultural/Historical** table would like to hear from you regarding your interests, concerns and ideas for restoration of the overall site and treatment of historic resources including the spring. Your comments will be used to help us meet the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act which is a necessary part of FEIS process.
 - NPS staff at the **Environmental/Restoration** table are interested in your concerns and comments regarding the ecological restoration of the site (i.e. restoration to natural conditions), ideas on what types of activities and access to the site might be appropriate, and questions about the demolition.
 - NPS staff at the **Documents/Information** table are available to answer questions and provide information about the National Park Service. General information about the Park Service and the sites it manages can be answered here. Also, paper copies of previous studies prepared during the DEIS process are available here for in-room review as well as a CD that you may take home.
3. Provide **written or verbal comment**. Comment deadline: **March 25, 2009**.

While discussing one-on-one with NPS staff is an important part of this meeting, we encourage you to provide written comments as well. You may do this in several ways:

 - Fill out a white **comment card** and place it in the boxes provided;
 - Visit the **Verbal Recording** table. Staff at this table will take your comments verbally, if you prefer not to write them down;
 - Or **ANYTIME BY MARCH 25, 2009**:
 1. Send written comments to the office address printed on the back of the comment card.
 2. Send an email to miss_info@nps.gov with your comments.
 3. Fax your comments to 651-290-3214.
4. Visit the **Podium Wall**.

Fill out the yellow card to tell others who attend this event what you think. Be very brief and stay with one topic per card. It will help others quickly understand your viewpoint. You may use more than one card if you have concerns that cover more than one topic. Use this method to informally communicate with other open house participants this evening.

Thank you for coming and sharing your thoughts on the future of this important place. Please be sure you have filled out the sign-in sheet at the registration table if you wish to be contacted if and when future meetings will be held.

Bureau of Mines/Coldwater Open House

Who should manage the land?

Who will own and manage the property?

No final decision has been made yet. The Department of the Interior currently owns the property and has said its *preferred alternative* (see attached blue sheet) is to maintain federal ownership and have the National Park Service manage the site. This alternative will be carried forward in a final environmental document that will be published in June. That will be followed by a 30-day public comment period. Based on that document and the comments it receives, the Department of the Interior will make a final decision. Interior could change its mind and decide to have someone else manage the land.

How do I influence the land ownership decision?

There will be a 30-day period following publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) when people and organizations can comment on the document and make recommendations to the Department of the Interior. If you leave contact information on the sign-in sheet at the registration table we will notify you when this review period starts this coming summer.

Who could own and manage the site?

Legally, a government agency or university could accept ownership and management of the site. This includes a federally recognized tribal government. Three federally recognized American Indian tribes had indicated interest in the property in 2006, and it is legally possible that the land could be transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to be held in trust for one of these tribes. The tribes are the Shakopee, the Prairie Island and the Lower Sioux Indian communities of the Mdewakanton Dakota. Two owners of adjacent property said in 2006 that they do not want the site (Minnesota DNR and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board).

What does this meeting have to do with that decision?

Nothing, really. Future ownership and management will be decided by the Department of the Interior after receiving comments on the Final EIS during the summer, 2009. This meeting focuses instead on how the property might be restored.

Why are we talking about restoration when we don't even know who's going to own the property?

Besides identifying a management agency, the Department of the Interior's preferred alternative has a second part which is restoring the site to park and open space. This means the buildings would be removed and the site restored to a natural condition. The spring would also be considered in the restoration. The entire site, along with the spring, is a culturally and historically important place. Demolition of the buildings and restoration of the site and spring could have positive and negative impacts. If this part of the preferred alternative remains in the final decision, demolition of the buildings could begin later this year with site restoration in 2010. So it is important that we ask you now for input on how the site and spring should be restored based on your reaction to the preferred alternative.

Bureau of Mines/Coldwater

What does it mean to “restore” the site?

In describing its *preferred alternative* (which might not be its final decision), the Department of the Interior said it prefers “removal of all existing structures and associated above-ground infrastructure (roads, power lines, ore bins, etc.) and restoration of the site to natural conditions.”

In helping the National Park Service describe what that might mean, please think about all of the site **except** Coldwater Spring which is addressed below.

Generally, site restoration to natural conditions probably means native plant restoration of the upland areas to oak savanna, while allowing the bluff faces to remain wooded (but removing invasive plants like European buckthorn).

A few of the buildings have deep foundations. Should those holes just be graded out to create depressions (which would likely become wetlands, given subsoil moisture on the site) or should they be filled to match surrounding contours?

The entire site or a defined area around Coldwater Spring could be restored to reflect one of the historic eras from 1820 forward. Such a restoration would not create a “natural” landscape but would be more in keeping with the site’s history.

Site restoration has the potential to destroy archeological and historic resources on the land. What measures do you think are needed to protect these resources?

If the government retains ownership, unlimited public access will likely be provided. That means the site would not be fenced, but should there be other measures taken to provide for public use of the site? Should there be trails? Should there be parking? Should there be interpretive signage discussing the many layers of history that come together on the site? Should something be left on the site to help interpret the mining research history associated with the site?

Other ideas?

What does it mean to “restore” Coldwater Spring?

In developing its *preferred alternative*, the Department of the Interior stated part of its plan is “restoration of the spring.” What does that mean, exactly?

It could mean restoration of the spring to some approximation of its condition prior to disturbance by European settlers. No one knows exactly what that looks like but we know enough about site geology that we could produce an approximation of what it was like. This would include removal of the spring house and concrete walls, and draining the reservoir/pond.

It could mean restoration of the spring to its period of significance as associated with the military fort, as reflected in photos from the 1880s. This would include repair of the spring house and the concrete-lined pond.

It could mean doing nothing, leaving the spring and pond largely as they now appear and leaving the spring house as-is, partially reflecting more than one period in history.

It could mean something else that you suggest.

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What is the “preferred alternative?”

Several alternatives were reviewed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of July 2006. The preferred alternative was selected from this document.

In preparing the 2006 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the Department of the Interior, a number of alternatives were identified for the future of the property. The Department of the Interior has selected Alternative D as its “preferred alternative.”

Under Alternative D, the federal government would manage and bear the costs for modification of all or part of the land, structures, or other improvements prior to conveyance or retention of the center. Modifications could include removal of all or a portion of the existing structures and associated above ground infrastructure (roads, power lines, ore bins, etc.) at the Center. Modifications could also include construction of new structures, or rehabilitation of existing buildings, or both.

Following completion of the modifications, the property would be disposed through transfer to a university or nonfederal government entity without restrictions, transfer to a university or nonfederal government entity with restrictions, or retention by the federal government for use such as those described under the three conceptual land-use scenarios (open space/park, interpretive/nature/history center, or training center/office park). The Department of the Interior has chosen retention by the federal government.

In selecting Alternative D, the Department of the Interior also stated its preference for the open space/park land use scenario. Under this conceptual scenario, the Center would be converted to open space and natural areas where the focus would be on restoration and use of the natural environment under this scenario. The Center property would become a park or be used as open space. This could be accomplished by removing some or all of the buildings, structures and roadways. Nonnative plant species could be identified and removed. Native vegetation could then be planted and the site naturalized to recreate the historic characteristics of an open oak savanna, prairie-type setting.

Alternative D contains some options, and the Department of the Interior has further clarified that its preferred alternative includes removal of all existing structures and associated above-ground infrastructure (roads, power lines, ore bins, etc.) at the Center, restoration of the site to natural conditions, restoration of the spring, and retention of the site by the federal government.