



George Washington Birthplace National Monument

Please Join Us

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

We are pleased to share this first in a series of newsletters with you about the development of our General Management Plan for George Washington Birthplace National Monument, in Westmoreland County, Virginia. The plan will provide guidance for the park's overall management and determine how the park will address resource protection, visitor use, and park operations over the next 15 to 20 years.

First, I would like to thank all of you who participated in our successful Community Partnership Workshop held last spring. This workshop provided us with a much better understanding of how the park fits in with our neighborhood and region. Here is a sample of what we heard at the workshop:

- The Northern Neck is a great place to live, but we are dealing with the pressures of being discovered
- Among our natural assets are the region's waterways, beaches, woodlands, eagles, and productive soils
- The history of the region, its historic buildings, the park, and the birthplace of national leaders are cultural assets
- There is a sense of pride in the historic significance of the area and the role of the region in national history
- Parts of the region are experiencing development pressure and the encroachment of sprawl
- The park is an integral part of the Northern Neck's tourism future

The workshop discussions will aid the park in understanding the region in which it is so integral a part, and provide direct input into the General Management Plan. We are looking closely at how the



The Birthplace Site – The house in which George Washington was born no longer stands. Its location and dimensions are indicated by an oyster shell outline.

Birthplace can help in addressing some of these important concerns, as well as those issues specific to the park.

The new General Management Plan will examine different ways the park can:

- best protect the park's resources
- offer interesting and meaningful experiences to those who visit the Birthplace
- tell stories appropriate to George Washington's life and how those stories fit in with other places honoring George Washington
- determine appropriate levels of visitor use and the types of facilities needed to support the park's mission and goals
- partner with local government agencies and organizations on mutual regional benefits

We would like to know your thoughts about what makes this park special, what uses are appropriate or desirable and how the National Park Service can best participate in the community's future. We need your support and advice in identifying and confirming the issues that should be addressed in the plan. Our first public meeting on March 14 is an important step in the planning process, which will take place over the next few years. The results of the meeting, along with other comments received in this initial phase of planning activities, will help shape the general management plan.

Please join us at this important meeting on March 14, from 6-8 PM at the A.T. Johnson School in Montross. Please refer to the back page for more information and ways to contact us, should you have any questions or wish to provide us with your views directly.

Thank you for your time and interest in George Washington Birthplace National Monument.

Vidal Martinez
Superintendent

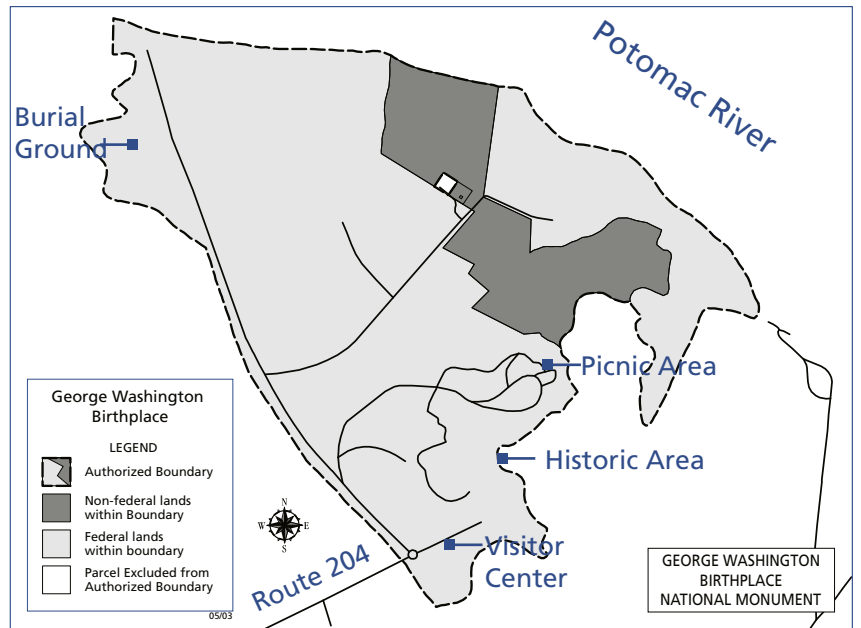
Mission of George Washington Birthplace National Monument

It is the mission of the National Park Service at George Washington Birthplace National Monument to preserve and interpret the history and resources associated with George Washington. The archeological structures, the commemorative edifices and the cultural landscape are conserved and employed to preserve the memory of George Washington – America's first and greatest hero whose actions were crucial in the establishment of the United States as an independent nation founded on the principles of personal liberty.

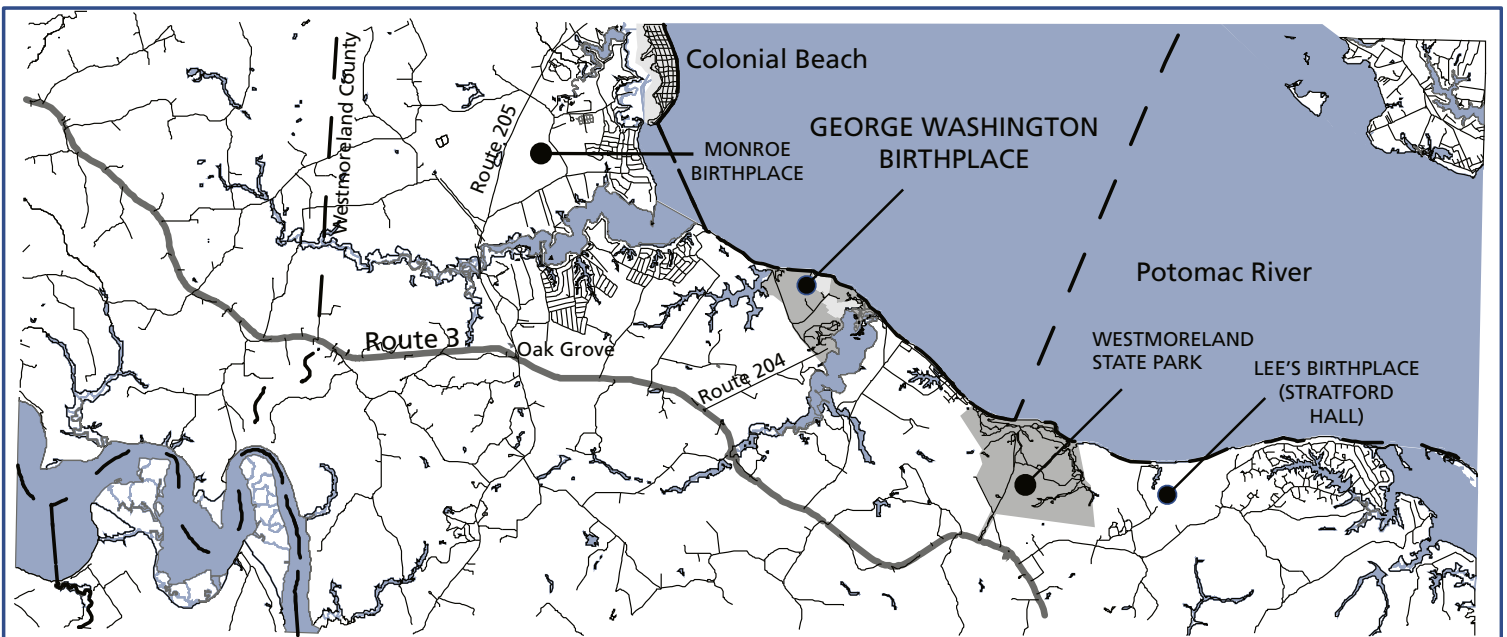
The Park

George Washington Birthplace National Monument preserves the birth site of the first president of the United States. Born in 1732, George Washington spent his first 3 1/2 years there, at the plantation known then as Popes Creek Plantation. Commemoration of the site began in the 19th century, well before the park was established in 1930. While the park is mainly an agricultural landscape today, there are many commemorative features that reflect the site's history. The park also contains a colonial farm established to convey the life and times of a Tidewater plantation during Washington's childhood.

The Potomac River forms the park's northern boundary. Popes and Bridges creeks form the eastern and western boundaries of the park. The park contains a wealth of natural resources, and its wetlands and marshes are important habitats that support a variety of plant and animal communities and species. About 550 acres within the park's authorized boundary are managed by the park, and they comprise a substantial portion of the Washington family plantation. The park boundary was expanded in 2002 and includes two privately-owned parcels. Like the monument, the surrounding landscape is dominated by rural agricultural land uses and features.



George Washington Birthplace National Monument is located in the Northern Neck of Virginia, 38 miles east of Fredericksburg on Virginia Route 3. George Washington Birthplace National Monument preserves the heart of Augustine Washington's plantation, the 17th century homesite of the immigrant John Washington, and the Washington Family Burial Ground. The park's neighbors include the birthplaces of James Monroe and Robert E. Lee.



Planning Issues

A function of the initial scoping activities for the General Management Plan, or GMP, is to expand upon and confirm the issues raised to date. The plan will touch upon issues that are of concern to park managers, park neighbors, the Northern Neck, and to the significance of the site to the nation.

Park Management

The Birthplace is significant from both cultural and natural resource perspectives. Management and maintenance of the Birthplace is challenging because of many "trans-boundary" issues such as water quality, invasive/exotic species, and the pressure placed on the site by growth and change in the community that surrounds it. New information on park resources has shed light on Native American use of the land, 17th-century settlement, and the life of slaves on the plantation.

Visitor Experience

The park's memorial landscape overshadows significant archeological resources related to Washington. This is particularly the case in the historic core—the original birth site—where many items in the landscape compete for the visitor's attention. The interplay between commemorative and Washington-related resources will be examined in the planning process. The role and responsibilities of operating a living farm as a means of interpreting the colonial context will also be explored. There is a need to extend the visitor experience beyond the visitor center to help foster a greater appreciation for the cultural and natural resources found on the entire property and beyond, extending and coordinating that experience with African-American and Native American points of view and experiences.

Visitor Use

Current visitation at the park (100,000 annually) is well within its capacity to serve. However, there are increasing pressures for the recreational use of park property, particularly along the Potomac River shoreline. There is also the need to consider the privacy and concerns of park neighbors.

Neighborhood, Community and Region

Growth and change in the area is physically altering the way in which the park manages its resources and the nature of the visitor experience. As development begins to surround the park, it becomes more difficult to manage and conserve the park's cultural and natural resources and maintain the rural character of the park's setting. The region is also becoming more interested in heritage tourism. The Birthplace plays an important role in this effort as one of the major providers of historic interpretation and education in the area. The GMP will need to address these issues as they pertain directly to the park's purpose and mission.



The visitor experience at George Washington Birthplace has changed over the years. The General Management Plan will need to respond to current issues and ideas about historic interpretation and visitor use.

What is a General Management Plan and Why is it Needed?

Periodically, the National Park Service (NPS) takes a fresh look at the management of a park's cultural and natural resources and the opportunities it offers visitors. In consultation with interested citizens, organizations and governmental agencies, the NPS articulates a shared vision for the future of the park in a general management plan. An associated environmental impact statement (EIS) is also prepared. The GMP plans for a time period of 15-20 years.

Although George Washington Birthplace was established in 1930, this will be its first general management plan. The GMP will provide the first comprehensive planning approach to the park since its 1968 Master Plan. It will propose strategies and potential partnerships for resource protection and visitor services, identify development proposals and associated costs, and address carrying capacity and park boundaries.

The planning process also provides opportunities to review new information about the park's cultural and natural resources and explore the significance of these resources; to consider the changes in the setting outside the park that are influencing the park and its community and region; and to learn of public views and concerns that will help shape the management of the park and its relationship to the community, the broader region and even the nation.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

George Washington Birthplace NM
1732 Popes Creek Road
Colonial Beach, VA 22443-5115

**Please Join Us March 14 from 6-8 PM
at the A.T. Johnson School Auditorium in Montross, Virginia
for the First Public Meeting
of the George Washington Birthplace National Monument General Management Plan**

This public scoping meeting is being held to introduce the general management plan project and to ask for comments from those in the park's neighborhood and broader community. The meeting will include a short presentation by Superintendent Vidal Martinez on the planning process and on what we heard at the Community Partnership Meeting last year.

WHERE: A.T. Johnson School
18849 Kings Hwy
Montross, VA 22520
WHEN: March 14, 2006 from 6-8 PM

To stay informed:

If you have questions or need more information about the meeting please contact the Superintendent's Office at 804-224-1732 or use any of the choices shown below.

- Read project newsletters to keep you up-to-date
- Visit the park's web site at <http://www.nps.gov/gewa/> for postings on the planning project
- Provide comments and suggestions at GEWA_GMP@nps.gov
- To be added to our mailing list or to send written comments, address correspondence to:

Superintendent, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, 1732 Popes Creek Road, Colonial Beach, VA 22443-5115