

- Minutes -

# PUBLIC INPUT

For Fayette Historic State Park -  
General Management Plan

(Notes taken by Daniel Lord ...edit by Paul N. Curtis)

On September 16, 2004, a public information and input meeting was held at the Fayette Historic State Park (HSP) Headquarters Building at the park. The purpose of the meeting was to share with attendees, information on the Management Planning process in general and its application for Fayette HSP specifically. A key element of this planning process is to gather public input on what the park users feel are important considerations for natural and historic/cultural resource values, education and recreation opportunities, management focus, visitor experience and development needs.

The meeting was moderated by Paul N. Curtis, Management Plan Administrator for DNR-Parks and Recreation Bureau (PRB), with assistance from staff of PRB, other Department programs, and History, Arts and Libraries (HAL). Public attendance at the meeting was counted at seventeen (17).

Following is an overview of the meeting content and public input:

**GENERAL:** (PowerPoint presentation)

- Introduction and planning process overview – discussion of where we're at and where we're going.
- Importance of filling out Comment Form.
- Purpose of meeting – to describe the process and most importantly, to gather public input.
- Why is the DNR is doing this?
  - More efficient and effective management of our park system.
  - Establish Purpose & Significance for each park, establish an Identity for the park.
  - Establish Management Zones to guide future planning and management decisions.
- Description of the informational tools that the DNR utilizes in this planning process (GIS) and the input gained from other DNR program staff.
- Zone descriptions & examples of them.
- Draft Purpose & Significance Statements for public review and comment – DNR is looking to incorporate the public stakeholders voice or opinion into the Management Plan.
- Overview of natural and historic/cultural resources, and recreational and educational opportunities that occur at Fayette HSP

- Review of Draft Zone Map that was developed. Looking for input from the meeting stakeholders.
- Internet posting on website for 30 days to solicit additional comments @ [www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans](http://www.michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans).

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:** (Public question/comment and DNR Response (in Italics), if one was given. The “Comment Form” was used to guide input.)

- Natural Resource Values and Comments:
  - Concern with dead wood from wind fall (result of storm events). Will these be cleaned out? – *Not entirely...only areas of use are cleaned out for safety, function, and aesthetic purposes. (i.e. trails, campgrounds and the Townsite) Deadfall that is in the woods will remain and be allowed to decompose naturally.*
  - Will these become a fire hazard? – *We don't believe so. They are quite dispersed, and actually are of benefit in that they provide a diversity in the age class of vegetative cover of the park. We prefer to see these naturally remedied.*
  - *Comment to attendees that the circa 1800's landcover was beech/maple forest. Over time we would like to see a return to that cover type.*
  - Enjoy experiencing nature through trail use. *We concur...we walked all of the trails today and highly recommend that experience.*
- Historical/Cultural Resource Values and Comments:
  - The importance of these resources is off the chart. It is a historical component for learning for children now and for years to come.
  - (Question to audience)...*do schools utilize this resource?* – Yes, significantly. School groups come from all over the region, as far away as St. Ignace and Tahquamenon to the east, Escanaba to the west and Marquette and Negaunee to the north. Escanaba has incorporated the history of Fayette in their curriculum and have made site visits to the Townsite a part of the schooling of their students.
  - (Question to audience) *Are there other regional locations for this type of historical experience?* There are individual buildings or lighthouses, but nothing comes close to what Fayette offers.
  - From a technical standpoint, the interpretation of what actually happened in the smelting of iron is lacking. You could challenge the metal workers from Michigan Tech to better illustrate and/or demonstrate the process.
  - The focal point of the Townsite is the hotel. Is there a possibility (through state funding) for it to be restored? *The hotel is indeed the focus of our (HAL) Townsite restoration efforts. The latest estimate we have for restoration, and this was from 1995, was a cost in excess of one million dollars. We don't have those resources available to us.*
  - Could a local benefactor earmark funds to be allocated to a specific building's restoration, such as the hotel? *HAL: "Bring it on", we have architectural plans in place, but lack the funding to proceed.*

- The old company store (half warehouse) could be utilized as a store for current day supplies for campers and boaters both. It could also house the gift shop from the Visitor Center. *HAL: Those are great ideas, but our approach to the whole site is to keep the Townsite historically accurate, and provide any modern amenities up above and away from the site.*
- Some like the Townsite the way it is now, not totally restored and leaving some room for imagination of what the site was like.
- Recreation Opportunity Comments:
  - Camping is an important component, but there are no showers and no dump stations.
  - The boat launch is under-developed for the growing walleye and salmon fishery in the bay. There are only two places on the peninsula to launch a boat. The existing launch in the park has parking for only five (5) car/trailers.
  - Opportunity to expand slips/harbor. *Comment that the existing harbor development was done with the recognition that it be as non-intrusive as possible, while still serving as a Harbor of Refuge (as it is now designated).*
  - Trails are used and appreciated. The total length of trails seems good, but we would like to see more routine maintenance of the trails to keep them clear. Baraga SP has trails covered with wood chips, making a very nice walking path. Don't know if something like that could be done at Fayette.
- Education/Interpretation Opportunity Comments:
  - The focus is on the (industrial) Townsite. There is a great opportunity to also focus on the Native American presence, possibly at Burnt Bluffs.
  - Would like to see Burnt Bluffs opened up and access improved to the limestone cliffs. *The remnants of occupation along the cliffs have been vandalized and degraded. For this reason, we are continuing the Director's order that prohibits use and occupancy of the Burnt Bluffs tract. Additionally, it is recognized that this area poses safety issues not only because of the cliffs, but also because of open fissures in the forest floor on this land.*
  - *Discussion/concurrence with group that the 'Significance Statements need to reflect impact of Native American influence on the site. (the Significance Statements have been modified to reflect this)*
  - Would like to see first person interpretation of the Townsite. *HAL: That is in our long-range plans for this location and is something we would like to do. Funding is an issue, and another is that we have no place to house the interpreters for this kind of an effort.*
  - The younger generation thinks differently, is wired differently than even the Generation X's. We need to understand this if we are going to effectively educate and interpret over the next twenty years.

- Are we looking at a Henry Ford type Museum or a Greenfield Village experience? The realities are that the infrastructure at the park and on the peninsula is not there to support such a level of development.
- A less-expensive method for interpretation may be more use of video and interactive computer stations.
- Could use more models
- 'DRAFT' Purpose & Significance Statements:
  - With our discussion about Native American occupation of the area, our Significance' Statements need to reflect that aspect. (*Note...this has been done with input from HAL*)
  - Are these statements ranked in some kind of priority order? – No
  - By including the Burnt Bluffs area in the mapping, you are encouraging people to take a risk by going out there and possibly degrading the already fragile environment. There are trespass issues (on speaker's land) and a rather large sinkhole besides the danger of the cliff drop-off. *We had discussion about this in our planning team meetings, and in the end decided that we had to include all of our ownership in the planning process. This tract is zoned as Primitive Zone and Ecologically Sensitive Zone (limestone cliffs), and as further protection, a Director's Order remains in effect that prohibits all use and occupancy of the site.*
- 'DRAFT' Management Zone Map:
  - With the remoteness of this location, suggest that the plan have the flexibility of allowing a future concession operation.
- Thoughts on Management Focus:
  - (*No responses specific to this*)
- Visitor experience:
  - The simplicity of the park and the environment is appreciated
  - Generally impressed by the historical component of the park and the natural beauty of the setting.
  - Like the trails. Like everything about it. We bought the property we did to be close to the park. We enjoy using it and bringing friends to appreciate it too.
- Development Issues:
  - More amenities for boaters
  - Increase slips, possibly expand.
  - Add new siding to hotel.
  - Water and sewer are limited. If there is to be any expansion this will have to be addressed.

- Need more ADA improvements for access to the Townsite and to the Townsite buildings. *We do have two wheelchairs available for use. Also, there is ADA parking on the trail from the campground.*
- Access is limited from the ADA parking space.
- Need improved signage on US 2.
- Can there be “Campground 500’ Ahead” signage along the county road (M-183) to warn people of the upcoming entrance to the park? A lot of people miss the entrance and end up using private drives to turn-around in.
- Other comments:
  - Money seems to be a big obstacle. There are private individuals, companies and foundations that invest in these kinds of efforts. Is there a grant writer for the state to go after these funds? *Yes, PRB has a grant writer on staff for our program needs. Specific to the Townsite, DNR is responsible (with technical assistance from HAL) for infrastructure improvements of the site. HAL is responsible for all education and interpretation improvements. HAL does not have a dedicated position for writing grants. It is handled by staff.*
  - There used to be a friends group, why isn’t there one currently? That group could join forces with the park to find additional sources of revenue. *We can’t really answer why there isn’t a friends group today. Enthusiasm for volunteer participation can come and go. We have had good experiences with friends groups in other parks.*
  - *(Response to audience regarding improvements) With improvements comes increased maintenance and budgetary impacts. We are totally self-sufficient and have no outside funding assistance or State General Fund assistance. Of necessity, we must carefully consider any expansion for its impact on our overall budget.*
  - Could the casinos be a benefactor? There is a 2 percent grant opportunity through them, but (per the speaker), they have severely cut back on funding outside projects, and the long-range forecast is that the casino heyday is over, that their business is static.
  - Are there any plans for marketing? – *The only marketing we can do is what is put out electronically on the internet, through press releases and general printed information available at MDOT Visitor Centers and DNR locations. There is a Directive in place that prohibits expenditures for marketing at this time for all State agencies due to the severity of the state’s budget situation. At one time, PRB had a statewide budget of approximately \$60,000 for all marketing. That’s not much. We have no marketing budget today.*
  - You could have a relationship with Travel Michigan. UP Guides are produced annually (100,000) and distributed.
  - General feeling that the State has not addressed or focused on the UP traveler. There are a lot of opportunities that aren’t picked up on by the State to draw people to the area. Build partnerships and relationships to help promote or sell the park to bring more people

in. *We commented again that this is problematic with the lack of utilities and infrastructure to support increased people pressures.*

- It seems to be word-of-mouth that promotes this area.
- Chamber of Commerce could come down for a tour just to help promote the park.
- The DNR needs volunteers and grant writers.