

# Colonial NHP

October 24, 2003

## STATE OF THE PARK (SUPERINTENDENT'S NARRATIVE) FOR FY2003

### Hurricane Isabel

On September 18, 2003, Hurricane Isabel hit Colonial NHP causing the worst disaster in the history of the park. Downed trees closed almost every road and trail. Bridges on the Island Drive moved off their piers. The Yorktown shoreline received extensive damage threatening the Colonial Parkway. The Glasshouse, the Archer Cottage and other structures were damaged. The greatest blow came to the basement of the Jamestown Visitor Center which was flooded with five feet of water covering most of the cases containing the Jamestown collection with over 900,000 artifacts. The question was asked: what could the park have done to better protect the collection? Measures recommended by the park hurricane plan were put in place during the days before Sept. 18. Those measures (sandbags, raising items to higher elevations, sump pumps, etc.) had worked for other category one hurricanes since 1957 when the building was constructed, but those measures were insufficient for this hurricane. Water entered the basement from at least four avenues. Moving the collection out of the building just before hurricanes threatened had never been attempted during the past 47 years because of the enormous size of the collection, the design of the basement storage with narrow doors that would have required taking the cases apart before moving, the expense, and the time—probably close to a week. It was common knowledge that the collection was in the flood plane and the park had given the highest priority in plans and programming to construct a new collections building. Ironically, groundbreaking for the new building occurred just days before Isabel. Probably, the lack of serious problems for 47 years (only a few inches of water in the outer office), was a reason why no one, inside or outside NPS, had ever recommended that the collection be moved to a temporary location pending construction of a new building. Isabel was an Act of Nature and a perfect storm with every element coming together to put five feet of water in the collection room.

NPS response to the tragedy was five star. The park staff, regional staff from the Northeast Museum Branch, the Incident Management Team, and many others immediately began recovery work which is estimated to take three years and many dollars. Sara Wolf who is directing the recovery and reprocessing project recently said: "The collection is pretty sturdy, and it's coming through extremely well."

An NPS Incident Management Team (followed in three weeks by another) came quickly and worked efficiently to access the damage, fix unsafe conditions, make emergency repairs, open closed areas, write contracts for the next phase, and more. They asked for and were responsive to park priorities. I am proud that NPS can respond in such a comprehensive way to this kind of disaster.

## Jamestown

What a year! Having Sandy Rives as the Jamestown Project Director and the Virginia State Director contributed greatly to the many accomplishments at Jamestown. The DCP/EIS was finally approved. Congress appropriated four million dollars for the Jamestown Collection Building and 1.8 million to begin design work for transportation projects. Successful NPS/APVA negotiations for the design and placement (on APVA land) of the new collections building resulted in a contract being awarded. Excellent progress was made on the design of the new Visitor Center for Jamestown and the seven million dollar appropriation had almost made it through Congress at year's end. Leslie Ullman did yeoman work during the year coordinating the many details of development and interpretive planning. We very much appreciate, Marie, your weighing in on the DSC decision to assign Curt Edlund as a construction/project manager for the Jamestown. The creative work of Curt and Leslie was one reason our design for the Visitor Center made it through the DAB.

One challenge during the year was the push by some at the APVA to increase revenues at Jamestown. We had several meetings without agreement on the APVA desire to remove Eastern National from the museum store at Jamestown. More to come on this . . .

Conversely, we (APVA and NPS) were together on several issues involving the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF). We had one minor success in that we now sell JYF tickets and they sell ours, but JYF has still have not agreed to a joint ticket with wider distribution. Also, thanks to the president and staff at Colonial Williamsburg we now have an arrangement to honor the "Historic Triangle" ticket at Jamestown and Yorktown. That has helped with visitor complaints at Jamestown and has made the entrance station operation smoother.

The three million-dollar shoreline protection project for Jamestown was almost finished when Isabel hit. Reports to date say that the construction held and prevented loss of archeological sites and historic lands.

## Yorktown

Relationships in Yorktown continue to provide good results for cooperative programs and projects. The greatest accomplishment was the completion of the land exchange and land use agreements involving 12 properties with benefits for resource protection, appropriate development, and reduced costs for NPS. Another wonderful cooperative venture between NPS and the Yorktown community was a number of special events all well attended including Yorktown Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, and the Virginia Symphony. Meetings were held with the Yorktown community to begin planning for the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Yorktown.

After nine years of work, the Carrot Tree restaurant opened as an NPS concession in a historic house on Main Street. Locals and visitors love it.

Much progress was made on a number of projects. The Poor Potter's was 90% finished at year's end. The new exhibit on George Washington's tent was opened with appropriate fanfare including attendance by Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis. The Wormley Pond Dam project was mostly finished and the new design proved its worth during Hurricane Isabel. The design for the new Yorktown Curatorial Building was approved and a challenge regarding the location from a few local people was successfully answered. The controversial proposal by Grace Church for an addition under an NPS easement is still procedurally on track; next steps include submission by Grace Church of their revised plan and then public comment.

## Green Spring and Cape Henry

The GMP/EIS for Green Spring made it through the final approvals by WASO, Interior and EPA with no objections. The long negotiations with James City County and the adjustments made to the Plan have carried the day. The Friends of NPS for Green Spring are a positive force. They sponsored a magnificent open house at Historic Green Spring during the summer and continue to be active with Park Watch, clean-ups, educational programs, and fund-raising.

Cape Henry, an unmanned site in the City of Virginia Beach, continued to receive excellent visitation. Our cooperative relationship with the Army at Fort Story helps to keep our costs low.

## General

One of the big reasons why the park met most of its challenges this year was the effective work, individually and collectively, of the park management team: Skip Brooks (Maint.), Tom Nash (LE and Natural Resources), Karen Rehm (Interp. and Cultural Resources), Patty Tremblay (Admin.), Sandy Rives (Jamestown, etc.), Mike Litterst (PA) and Becky Eggleston (Coord.). We also received excellent and timely assistance from many in the Northeast Regional Office. Partners and volunteers contributed in many significant ways.

**The greatest need we have is for an increase in our operating budget. Colonial NHP used to have 125 permanent employees and 50 seasonals. Now we have 85 permanent employees and three seasonals. We have closed some parts of the park and curtailed non-essential activities. If we are to fulfill our responsibilities for the proper development at Jamestown and Yorktown, for the 2006 and 2007 Observances, and for basic park programs, we must have an operating increase soon.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Alec Gould  
Park Superintendent**