

VISION STATEMENT

Fort Pulaski, built starting in 1829, ranks as one of the best preserved “Third System” coastal forts in the United States. The Battle for Fort Pulaski, April 10-11, 1862, was the first battle in history to feature rifled artillery on a large scale. Union forces used rifled cannons to breach the fort’s walls from a mile away, a stunning achievement which demonstrated the improved range and accuracy of these new weapons. The results of the battle were widespread. The age of smoothbore artillery and the heavy dependence on coastal forts would now rapidly come to an end.

Complementing Fort Pulaski National Monument’s rich military history is an abundance of natural beauty and sweeping vistas. The park includes more than 5,000 acres of nearly pristine salt marsh, shorelines and nature trails. McQueen’s Island constitutes one of the largest federally protected salt marsh environments in the U.S. Several rare and endangered species are also located within the park.

The Centennial vision of Fort Pulaski National Monument is to improve access to and increase public awareness of the park’s remarkable natural resources. Specifically, the park proposes to significantly restore and improve the scenic six-mile-long Rails-To-Trails on McQueen’s Island. Following the shores of the Savannah River, the abandoned railroad grade of the Rails-To-Trails offers a rich combination of historic and natural significance. With the Chatham County Government of Georgia’s commitment to fund 50% of the project’s costs, we are assured of preserving a trail appreciated by many.

The future of the hiker/biker trail will also expand to include Battery Park located on the adjacent island, Tybee Island. The two mile extension of the trail will follow the corridor of the original Savannah & Atlantic Railroad onto Tybee Island, allowing visitors to access a reconstructed gun battery position (currently being developed). Visitors will enjoy a beautiful view of Fort Pulaski and the Cockspur Island Lighthouse while learning about the bombardment of the fort during the Battle for Fort Pulaski.

Supporters of Fort Pulaski National Monument include Chatham County Government of Georgia, the Friends of Fort Pulaski and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We are confident that the list of supporters and donors will quickly grow for a popular project such as this. Together, we can meet our Centennial Challenge with confidence and pride.

GOALS

Stewardship

- Provide inspiring, safe and accessible places for people to enjoy – the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

The Rails-To-Trails overlooks the Cockspur Island Lighthouse, one of only five surviving lighthouses in Georgia. Built in 1856, the beacon emerged unscathed from the fierce artillery battle in 1862, and proudly marks the entrance of the Savannah River. Erosion and the presence of shipworms on the wooden foundations herald the eventual destruction of the lighthouse and the National Park Service plans to halt its downfall. By constructing a revetment composed of sand and grass cover around the base of the lighthouse, erosion will be eliminated and the fragile wood foundations will be protected from further shipworm attacks.

Most importantly, replacement of the revetment will provide a safe and accessible walking area for the visiting public and employees. The isolated location on the submerged islet has engaged numerous boating visitors and a replenished revetment will enable safe landings for all who wish to visit the historic lighthouse.

Recreational Experience

- Help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans

Rehabilitate historic abandoned railroad grade

Fort Pulaski National Monument plans to restore the Rails-to-Trails system located on McQueen's Island near Savannah, Georgia. The old Savannah & Atlantic Railroad was an excursion line built in 1887 that linked the city of Savannah with the bustling beach resort of Tybee Island seventeen miles away. With the help of Chatham County, our park would like to not only restore the rail system but also extend the current trail to entice visitors to Battery Park.

Repairs to the abandoned railroad grade along with numerous interpretive signs will help visitors better appreciate and understand the significance of this unique area. Insufficient protection from wave action in the Savannah River and from spring tides has severely undermined the trail in some sections. Repairs will need to be made in these sections, and a long-term solution to erosion put in place.

The park welcomes more than 350,000 visitors a year, many of whom use this trail during their visit. Rehabilitation of the trail will allow us to expand our visitation by offering easy and safe access to entire length of our most popular nature trail while providing instructional exhibits on wildlife and habitat.

Education

- Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

Curriculum-Based Education Program

Fort Pulaski National Monument is a well preserved national historic site surrounded by a large metropolitan school district (Chatham County, Georgia). School-sponsored field trips to Fort Pulaski that originate in Chatham County have slowly declined over the years. The park proposes to develop a teacher-led, curriculum-based set of activities that will promote school visits to the park.

To achieve this goal, the park proposes to host teacher workshops for one week in the summer in order to develop activities that will be helpful and user-friendly for teachers bringing their students to the park. The park also proposes to serve as a qualified training site for a four-hour annual in-service training each fall for Chatham County teachers. Teachers will be encouraged to develop lesson plans which relate directly to the interpretive themes of the park and to the Georgia Performance Standards, the state-mandated teaching guidelines for all Georgia public schools. Fort Pulaski's education initiative should improve both the quantity and quality of visitor satisfaction, understanding and appreciation of the Monument.