

Battlefield Update

At the CBHMA Board of Directors' meeting at Little Bighorn Battlefield on June 24 Supt. Darrell Cook addressed the future transfer of lands acquired by the Custer Battlefield Preservation Committee to the U.S. Government.

He clarified the confusion caused by the proposal of the National Park Service to delete Crow tribal lands (56,000 acres) added to the Bighorn Canyon Recreational Area in 1968, among other site modifications. Restrictions do not permit proper NPS management of this acreage.

Congressional legislation drafted by the agency would authorize both the transfer and deletion. CBPC lands would be managed by the NPS "in perpetuity." Supt. Cook emphasized that the NPS is *not* attempting "to trade lands with the Crows but add to Little Bighorn Battlefield and to subtract from Bighorn Canyon."

The draft legislation is the subject of negotiations between the Interior Department and the Crows. Tribal Chairman Venne has approved the bill "but cannot move it." Montana's congressional delegation, "will not accept it without tribal approval." (*Draft bill dated March 9, 2005 may be obtained from the editor.*)

Supt. Cook also reported as to the status of the project to expand the Battlefield Visitor Center.

After consulting the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the NPS found that these modifications would have an "adverse effect" on the cultural landscape of the Battlefield. However, the final environmental assessment (EA) of the proposed 750 square foot expansion should be completed within 60/120 days and result in "no significant finding" of such impact.

Supt. Cook also underscored such problems with the existing facility as code violations, no handicap access and inadequate storage.

Interim EA and related documents may be accessed at www.nps.gov/libi/siteindex.htm.

Visitor Center Expansion

Montana SHPO Mark F. Baumler provided the following synopsis as to the status of the consultations with the NPS as required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Our last Section 106 NHPA consultation [with the Battlefield] was in December 2006 in which we reached agreement with a finding of adverse effect for the modifications and recommended that the NPS invite the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) to formally participate in resolution of the adverse effects under 36CFR800.

NPS did notify ACHP of the finding of adverse effect and by letter of Feb. 21, 2007, the ACHP wrote to the NPS that they would participate in further consultation. In our December letter we also recommended that interested parties be involved in the discussion of how to resolve the adverse effects (avoid, minimize or mitigate) before drafting a Memorandum of Agreement, if necessary.

In a letter of May 14, 2007, Supt. Cook informed us that a Cultural Landscape Inventory of the Monument would be performed this summer and invited us to visit during the study. Although we are not able to do that, I strongly support this effort and believe it will add greatly to the discussion of the visitor center impacts and how they can best be viewed and resolved. Significance of the battlefield landscape has long been assumed and implicitly recognized, but has not been explicitly identified, especially to modern historic-cultural landscape standards.

We also received notification that the NPS has formally approved the Crow Tribe's application to become a certified Tribal Historic Preservation Office and thereby assume many of the duties of the SHPO within the exterior boundaries of the Crow Reservation. The designated Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Officer is Mr. Dale Old Horn of Crow Agency.

*Pertinent correspondence may be obtained from **The Dispatch**. Ed.*

From Reno Hill

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After lunch we hiked to the site of the new marker for Corporal John Foley, where a dedication ceremony was held with the help of some of our youngsters. Poignant remarks by Chief Historian John Doerner noted ample warrior testimony indicating that Foley was the lone soldier who would have escaped from the Custer Battlefield on horseback if he had not shot himself.

Many took the opportunity to hike a little farther to the marker for Sgt. James Butler. With the expertise of Jim Burst, any and all questions as to the history of the Butler marker could be answered.

Heading towards Finley Ridge and Calhoun Hill, Kevin Connelly outlined possible scenarios on this part of the battlefield. Many students believe that this was the sector where the end began. At Calhoun Hill, we discussed the events that transpired there, where Lieut. Jimmy Calhoun was true to his word to brother-in-law George Custer that he would not find him wanting.

Our next stop was the Keogh Trail where we hiked to the scene of the demise of Company I and the remnants of Companies C and L. Some took the opportunity to use the rarely accessible vista of Horse Holders' Ravine, which gives a better vantage point than the usual, but deceptive, view from the roadway.

Our journey ended at Last Stand Hill where we attended the Annual Memorial Service organized by Board Member Bill Wells.

Hats off to Tom Heski for planning yet another quality field trip that took us to places that we could not likely ever access on our own.

Tom would like to thank all those who stepped forward and took over due to his medical emergency, especially Kevin Connelly, Joe Creaden, John Doerner, Ron Nichols and Lee Noyes. A special thank you also to Nick and Nancy Dramis for transporting much needed water!