

Chapter 8 - Comments and Responses

Introduction

This section contains the responses to the comments received by OPRHP on the Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve. The Draft Master Plan/DEIS was issued November 18, 2009. A Public Hearing was held December 8, 2009 at the Cold Spring Harbor Public Library in Cold Spring Harbor, NY. The comment period was scheduled to end January 8, 2010.

During the Public Hearing, twenty (20) people out of approximately seventy-five and their comments were recorded. During the comment period for the Draft Master Plan/DEIS, the Agency received forty (40) written comment letters. A list of persons providing comments is included at the end of this chapter.

The types of comments received included document editing suggestions, requests for clarification of information presented in the document, and comments related to specific aspects of the plan. All comments were reviewed and organized by categories. Responses to these comments are found in this section and were considered in the revisions found in this Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

OPRHP appreciates the time and effort that persons interested in the future of Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve have invested in their review and comments on the Draft Master Plan/DIES and their participation in the public hearing.

Response to Comments

This section is organized by category. Following each category heading, there is a summary of the comments received. Following each summarized comment is the Agency's response.

General Comments on the Plan and Process

Comment: Implementation Priorities

Does the listing within each Implementation Priorities section reflect the chronological order in which these actions will be implemented?

Response:

The most simple answer is no; the projects are not in any specific order. A stewardship committee will be developed once the plan is adopted to help guide and implement elements of the master plan and projects will be completed when funding is available.

Comment: Park Preserve Designation

I support the preserve designation so long as it does not exclude recreation in appropriate areas.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: "Wild" and Undeveloped Area

Leave the western area of Caumsett as "wild" or undeveloped as possible.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Don't Change the Park

Do not change the park; leave it the way it is. Any improvements should be just to maintain what's there.

Response:

Some changes are necessary for the ecological and historic preservation of the park. Such changes are being addressed in the master plan.

Comment: Recreation Development

We are concerned that the recreational development proposed in the plan conflicts with its stated goal to preserve the flora, fauna, overall environment, and natural beauty of the park.

Response:

All of these factors were considered during the planning process and any recommendations of the plan are cognizant of the unique natural characteristics of the park and will not jeopardize the viability of the environment.

Comment: Funding for Planning and Implementation

Where is the money coming from to pay for this plan and to implement the recommendations in it?

Response:

The money to prepare and implement the plan is a combination of public and private funding. Implementation will be contingent upon future available funds.

Park Operations

Comment: Restore Agriculture

Caumsett should return to its agricultural roots. The park should support community supported agriculture, the return of the dairy farming operation, should have sheep to graze the fields, should be modeled after Shelburne Farms in Vermont, and the walled garden should be restored to its original use and a farmers' market should be held there.

Response:

These ideas were all considered during the master planning process. However, Caumsett will be operated as a park preserve and the agricultural history of the estate will be interpreted.

Comment: Water Fountains

Water fountains should be available for the public in each of the parking lots and the restrooms.

Response:

Water fountains will be installed where potable water can safely be made available.

Comment: Welcome Center

Create a welcome center and gift store where Volunteers for Wildlife is currently located.

Response:

The plan outlines a direction for the development of a visitor's center within the Farm Group. The current location of Volunteers for Wildlife will be used as a park office and public restroom.

Comment: Benches

Please install benches on the bluff near sign post #12.

Response:

Sign post 12 is located within a coastal erosion area and therefore it is unsafe to have a bench in this location.

Comment: Comfort Station at Fisherman's Parking Lot

A comfort station should be placed at Fisherman's parking lot.

Response:

The Fisherman's Parking Lot is a small parking area with limitations on useable space. The plan proposes the development of a self-composting comfort station located approximately .5 miles south of the Fisherman's Parking Lot.

Comment: Stairs at Fisherman's Parking Lot

Please repair the stairs from Fisherman's Parking Lot down to the shoreline.

Response:

This is a routine maintenance issue and will be addressed by the park manager and staff.

Comment: No Parking Lot at Fisherman's Road

Please do not construct a parking lot adjacent to Fisherman's Road.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Use of Hay Bales in Park

The DMP/EIS should plan for the disposal of materials such as hay bales that are used for seasonal displays. If park management does not know the composition of plant material used in displays they should not be disposed of within the park. The existing practice of using hay bales to mitigate erosion may actually be spreading invasive seeds within the park.

Response:

Invasive species removal has been addressed in the master plan and will be done in a manner to ensure a safe user experience and proper maintenance of the facility.

Comment: Walled Garden

The walled garden has already been compromised by State Parks within the past decade by the destruction of a wall section by the existing parking lot for a new gate, the replacement of the existing garden layout and vegetation and the placement of statues from other locations in Caumsett. Do not change this further.

Response:

The walled garden will be managed in a manner that is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation. These standards include preserving and protecting the garden's important character-defining features. Any alterations to the garden will be reviewed for compliance with these Standards by the SHPO.

Comment: Organic Dump Site

Maintain the current organic dump site, perhaps with some screening foliage. This area provides cover and food for numerous species of birds.

Response:

The plan addresses the management of the existing debris pile and sets forth a direction for the management of the area.

Comment: Signage in the Park

Signage in the park should be kept to a minimum. Too much signage only detracts from nature, unnecessarily adding man-made distractions to the natural world. Post more signs limiting the speed of bicyclists.

Response:

The plan makes recommendations for improving of the signs in the park. Signs will be made more efficient, meaning there will be fewer signs; however, these signs will have more than one piece of information on them. These signs will not be visually intrusive. Any traffic signs must comply with NYSDOT standards.

Comment: Equestrian Center Access Road

The road to the equestrian center must be maintained for large horse trailers. This road has to provide for a smooth ride for the truck and its passengers.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Garbage Cans

Please remove many of the garbage cans that are in Caumsett; they only detract from nature along the trails.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Manure Management

Developing alternatives for the handling and disposal of manure is one of the Operating and Maintenance Goals listed on page 56. However, this should be given priority in the Plan because invasive plants, particularly Mile-a-Minute but also Mugwort, are growing over an area of at least two acres around the manure piles, and feral cats have been observed there.

Response:

A provision has been added to the master plan that a manure management plan is in the contract with the concessionaire and will be enforced.

Comment: Hazardous Trees

There are numerous hazardous trees throughout the park that should be removed promptly.

Response:

The OPRHP Tree Policy sets forth the appropriate direction for hazardous tree management statewide. If a hazardous tree is in a state park, the park manager handles the tree in accordance with the aforementioned policy.

Comment: Park Police Patrols

Expand Park Police patrols on the Main Drive during busy weekends.

Response:

This is an operational issue and is beyond the purview of the Master Plan.

Comment: Roles of Law Enforcement

The role of law enforcement in the protection of the natural resources of the park is noticeably absent from the draft plan. Law enforcement should play a key role in the enforcement of many of the natural community protection strategies and ensure public compliance, and therefore should be an overarching strategy across all natural resource protection strategies.

Response:

OPRHP has the authority to enforce Environmental Conservation Law and regularly coordinates with DEC's Division of Law Enforcement.

Comment: Equestrian Permit

Will the permit apply to those of us who live on the border of the park, have horses and ride occasionally in the park?

Response:

The equestrian permit will apply to all horse owners who do not stable their horse(s) at Caumsett. The Long Island Park Region will develop two separate equestrian permits, an annual permit and a day-use permit, that the public can purchase based on their needs.

Comment: Equestrian Use of the Park

All horse visitors should pay a fee and should be required to wear helmets. The permit should also include a code of conduct that patrons are required to sign.

Response:

Comment noted. Please refer to the previous comment regarding the Equestrian Permit.

Comment: Fuel Tanks

What happened to all the old fuel tanks?

Response:

There are currently 15 petroleum bulk storage tanks in service at Caumsett SHP, 4 above ground tanks and 11 underground. The tanks are all up to code and operated in accordance with existing DEC petroleum bulk storage regulations. Most of the tanks have been replaced within the past 10 years. Since OPRHP acquired the park in 1960, there has not been any evidence of leaks from any of the tanks that have been removed and replaced. DEC spill records indicate that there had been a very minor gasoline spill in 1997 while a tank was being filled. Necessary cleanup and removal actions were completed and the spill case was closed.

Comment: Water Service

I'm really curious as to how the Suffolk County Water Authority brought water to Caumsett first before they brought it to any other place.

Response:

This comment is beyond the purview of the Master Plan.

Natural Resources

Comment:

Please consider planting Sugar Maples and other fruit bearing trees along roadways.

Response:

The selection of plantings along the park's roadways will be guided by the findings of the cultural landscape report. Within undeveloped (naturalized) areas of the park, only native tree and plant species will be considered in order to prevent the spread of non-native and invasive plant species.

Comment: Additional Natural Resource Information Needs

Natural Resource Protection and Management (page 63) states that "Compiling adequate research and background information and documentation is a critical first step toward defining significance and determining the appropriate management measures that are needed to preserve and protect these resources." The draft Master Plan does not contain enough such information to establish the baseline called for in the above quote. The following should be added to the plan:

- A more complete discussion of the bird populations in the Park, including both breeding and migratory birds. The only discussion in the draft Master Plan is an outdated bird checklist in Appendix B and a short paragraph on page 164.
- NYS Breeding Bird Atlases of 1980-85 and 2000-06, published in association with the NYS Ornithological Association and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in cooperation with the NY Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit at Cornell University. These surveys taken together provide a valuable resource in evaluating changes in the avian population over the 20-year interim.
- Invasive Aquatic Plant Survey of Lakes and Ponds in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, November 2006, prepared by NYSDEC, Division of Water, Bureau of Water Assessment and Management. This report contains results for Caumsett's Fresh Pond.
- Box Turtle (Terrapin Carolina) Study at Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve.
- Breeding Bird Data for Caumsett that is found on the NYS DEC website www.dec.ny.gov/animals,plants,aquaticlife,birds in Block number 6253C.

- A butterfly list in taxonomic order, rather than alphabetic order.

Response:

The Bird Breeding Atlas was used to help identify the bird species of the park. Unfortunately, the reference to the atlas was omitted from the references but it has since been added. The most recent bird checklist has also been added to the appendices. The box turtle study has been added to the appendices and the butterfly list has been updated. Information on aquatic plants in Fresh Pond was provided by OPRHP to DEC for its 2006 report. This information and reference has been added to Appendix C.

Comment: Natural Resource Restoration

Natural resource restoration opportunities should be identified where appropriate, including establishing strict monitoring protocols for any restoration projects undertaken.

Response:

The master plan uses a conceptual approach to proposed development and restoration projects.

Comment: Tree Management

I have concerns about tree management in the park, including removal of “unsafe” trees. Such trees have proven wildlife benefit. If safety is the concern, close the park if necessary during high winds - otherwise, let nature take its course.

Response:

The OPRHP Tree Policy directs the removal of hazardous trees that impact park operations. The policy states, “...aging mature trees, standing dead snags, downed trees, and forest openings created by wind and other natural disturbances provide important habitat for many species of birds, wildlife, and other organisms. Downed vegetation, including large trees that are allowed to fall to the forest floor, is important for enhancing forest soils and allowing new forest stands to regenerate in forest openings.”

Comment: Forest Management

Please cut the woods. Cutting is good for the forest and we’re now losing the understory. Additionally, the plan should include provisions to monitor forest health, including plant species composition, cover, density, and regeneration at set intervals (5-year, 10-year).

Response:

The OPRHP tree policy provides direction for the management of forests and the understory.

Comment: Field Management & Mowing

Manage the fields as they were managed during Marshall Field’s era. The current mowing practices are allowing weeds to take hold and the grass is growing too tall. The fields were not intended to be grown in with woody growth and weeds. Restricted mowing also reduces the areas available to equestrians because grass over 6” high is dangerous for riding (horses cannot see holes and uneven places that may cause them to stumble, harm themselves and throw the rider). We appreciate and agree with the need to restrict mowing in order to maintain and improve wildlife habitat. But a balance should be found between these two uses of the fields.

Response:

Many of the open fields were used as pasture or for haying. It is neither practical nor consistent with the agency's sustainability policy to continue this practice. The reduced mowing plan will still preserve the historic pattern of field and forest, and the equestrian trails will be managed to provide safe opportunities for riders.

Comment: Debris Pile and Invasive Plants

Overall, the draft master plan effectively addresses the issue of invasive species management within the park. However, the disposal of the weedy debris pile should identify strategies to ensure invasive weeds are not spread during its disposal. Norway maples should be removed from the park, as well.

Response:

The management of invasive species is addressed in the Master Plan and those guidelines will be applied to the management of the debris pile.

Comment: Invasive Animal Species

The invasive species management strategy should also address the potential for invasive animal species, particularly feral cats, and call for their immediate removal from the park. The master plan should define what best management practices would be considered for the removal of invasive species in the marsh also.

Response:

Discussion of wildlife and nuisance animals has been added to Chapters 5 and 6. The maritime beach management strategy provides direction for the removal of feral animal species in the park. OPRHP has guidelines in place for feral cat management and these guidelines will be applied to Caumsett in plan implementation. Invasive species control is approached on a priority basis considering threatened sensitive resources, invasiveness of the species in question, and ease of control which will include consideration of factors such as staffing, access, and permit requirements. Best management practices for control of invasive species in the marsh would be explored during preparation of park-specific invasive species control/removal plans. Control of invasive species in wetlands is more complex due to wetland permitting, and will be coordinated with DEC.

Comment: Deer Population Control

The master plan should contain explicit strategies for controlling the deer population, in furtherance of maintaining the park's high quality forest communities. Cull the deer so that there's a balance between deer and natural resources—consult DEC about this.

Response:

Comment noted. Please see the additional Wildlife and Nuisance Animal Management section of Chapter 5: Analysis and Alternatives of the Master Plan.

Comment: No Deer Culls

Please do not cull the deer population.

Response:

Comment noted. Please see the additional Wildlife and Nuisance Animal Management section of Chapter 5: Analysis and Alternatives of the Master Plan.

Comment: Control of Recreation in the Sand Hole

The plans to control the destructive jet-ski recreation in the Sand Hole area are inadequate. Plans should include monitoring by camera and hefty fines for violators in addition to the planned signs and patrols. While patrols would be a wonderful welcome addition to the area, it is unlikely that the Park will be able to fund them extensively. So, monitoring by camera and fines levied on violators would produce better results. There must be a way of identifying violators by the numbers on their boats or skis.

Response:

Comment noted. This issue is beyond the purview of the Master Plan.

Comment: Water Craft Activity in Salt Marshes

The draft plan identifies the need for appropriate signage to inform park patrons about the structure and function of salt marshes and the valuable ecosystem services salt marsh provides. Signage should be expanded to address, and specifically limit, the high boat activity and use of personal watercraft in and near salt marsh habitat.

Response:

The park will have a signage program for land based activities however, control of water activities at the Salt Marsh are beyond the jurisdiction of OPRHP.

Comment: Boardwalk in Salt Marsh

The draft plan does not consistently describe the boardwalk structure that is proposed for installation within or near the salt marsh. The proposed structure is alternately described as a boardwalk "from the trail into the marsh" and observation decks along the Plank Road Trail "to better control access into the low marsh". The plan also states that because the structure would be "above the mean high water mark" that no permit would be required from DEC. However, this is not consistent with the statement that the structure would prevent trampling of the low marsh vegetation - which by definition is at an elevation below mean high water. This should be clarified. Is the proposed structure just an observation platform landward of the marsh extent? Or is it a boardwalk into the marsh itself?

Response:

The language in the plan has been changed to more accurately describe the proposed boardwalk. It's worth noting that any proposed structures and/or development within the master plan is purely conceptual at this time. In addition, OPRHP would only install allowable, permitted structures in the park.

Comment: Fresh Pond Management

Fresh Pond Management Strategy (pages 67-68): Alternative 3 includes constructing an observation deck. This would degrade the pond's attributes described as follows in the Background for Analysis paragraph, "Fresh Pond is one of the major water features of the park and adds environmental and scenic value to the park." Currently, the view of the fields, pond, shore and L I Sound from the main house is uncluttered by manmade structures. An observation deck could interrupt that natural sweeping view. Also, no evidence is presented that there is a need for an observation deck for walkers.

Response:

The purpose for constructing an observation deck is to better protect important plant communities and water quality (which are being negatively impacted by patrons under current conditions). The design and placement of any structure will be determined in consultation with the SHPO and will preserve important views both of and from the pond.

Comment: Endangered Species Management

The plan should include more specific strategies regarding endangered species management; including ensuring seasonal stewards are deployed by April 1st each season in order to adequately protect early season shorebird nest attempts. The plan should explicitly state native predators will be removed where appropriate, and non-native predatory species, including but not limited to feral cats, will be immediately removed from the park before a colony or large population can become established.

Response:

Comment noted; please refer to endangered species management strategies as well as added sections on wildlife and nuisance animal management. OPRHP is developing guidelines for management of piping plover, and these guidelines will include addressing predators using an integrated approach to control. In addition, OPRHP will develop, implement and adapt as needed, a predator removal protocol for the park that sets thresholds/limitations to maintain a balance of all native species at Caumsett. Controlling piping plover predators will address predators of other state threatened or special concern animal species in the park.

Buildings

Comment: Reuse the Greenhouses

Restore the greenhouses and open for use by local growers or community supported agriculture (CSA).

Response:

Restoring and operating the greenhouses is not considered to be feasible due to the high cost involved. The plan provides for the preservation and interpretation of the greenhouses in a manner that does not preclude their restoration.

Comment: Reuse Vacant Buildings

There is a great deal of potential for the vacant buildings, consider leasing to tenants that will enhance a visitor's experience in the park. Possible uses for the Main House include: a Bed and Breakfast or consider renting it out for weddings and other events - or use other buildings for these purposes.

Response:

The master plan identifies appropriate uses of the Main House in Appendix G. Further, the plan recommends the development of a special events policy regarding use of buildings and the appropriateness of events that will be used to help determine the viability of future uses.

Comment: Vehicles and Debris

Please instruct Nassau BOCES remove unsightly debris and vehicles near the Girl's Cottage.

Response:

Comment noted. However, this is beyond the purview of the Master Plan and will be handled by the park management.

Comment: Park Office and Restroom Relocation

There is no need to move park office and restrooms—it is an extra expense and the money could be used to upgrade the existing bathrooms.

Response:

The draft plan explains that the relocation of the park office and restrooms was planned prior to the development of the master plan. Moreover, the current location is too close to the maintenance area for the park and it is desirable to have the office and restrooms closer to the parking area in an effort to keep park operations and park patrons separate and safe. It is generally desirable to locate the principle park office and public restrooms in close proximity to the main public entrance. The current offices and restrooms are also located within the maintenance area; such areas are generally closed to park patrons for reasons of public safety. The cost of moving the park offices and public restrooms are expected to be significantly less than the cost of moving the park's maintenance operations.

Recreation

Comment: Dog Run

Please consider putting in a dog run. I find it sad that one is not allowed to take ones dog to walk in the park; instead we have to squeeze by racing cars on narrow country roads.

Response:

Dogs are not allowed in the park for health, safety and environmental reasons.

Comment: Kayak Launch

We support the development of a kayak launch. What about launching from Lloyd Harbor?

Response:

The master plan addresses kayaking on page____. It was determined that the land between Lloyd Harbor Road and Lloyd Harbor is narrow and does not allow enough room for a formal launch site.

Comment: No Launching in the Long Island Sound

Please do not allow launching at Long Island Sound as it will have a negative impact on the salt marsh and nesting areas. In addition, allowing the launch of water craft at the shore will certainly cause much more harm. As it is, Fisherman's Road is already well used and car-top access will only increase traffic. Moreover, it would seem to open the park to new liabilities should visitors be injured in this unsupervised area.

Response:

Comment noted. Car-top boat launching was discussed during the planning process and the analysis can be found in Chapter 5: Analysis and Alternatives.

Comment: Fisherman Access to Shoreline

Fishermen should also be willing to walk to the shoreline from the existing Main Parking lot. A cleaning station at the beach would be ideal.

Response:

The existing permit system used for fishing and the Fisherman's Lot has been successful for many years. Asking someone to walk with fishing gear from the Main Parking area would not be feasible as the shoreline is over 2 miles from the Main Parking area. There is no potable water service at the shoreline for a cleaning station.

Comment: SCUBA Diving

Please reconsider your decision with respect to SCUBA Diving at Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve and allow an expansion of the areas open to diving. SCUBA Divers are probably the most environmentally and ecologically aware users. In most cases, you cannot tell when divers have been present, except for a wet spot on the ground from their wet equipment as they geared down and packed up.

Response:

In addition to a decrease in permits, there is limited space at the shore to accommodate a variety of water-dependent uses. Expansion would create conflicts.

Comment: Windsurfing

As a member of the local Long Island Windsurfing community, I would like to kindly ask for the consideration of our needs. Windsurfing has been a big part of life for a number of Long Island and New York State residents for many years, however this relatively small community of athletes is woefully underserved in terms of access to viable, safe and clean launch areas from which open waters can be reached. We would like to enjoy the same access rights envisioned for users of other types of car-top vessels such as kayaks and canoes which have similarly minimal requirements in space, footprint on the beach and transportation.

Response:

Windsurfing was considered during the planning process and it was determined that this activity creates a conflict with the endangered species nesting at the shoreline and with sea-grass restoration efforts. In addition, there is a potential conflict with fisherman and other water-dependent uses.

Comment: Sledding

Please allow sledding at the park.

Response:

Due to operational concerns, sledding at the park is not allowed.

Parking

Comment: Northeast Parking

Do not develop the proposed Northeast parking lot.

Response:

Parking expansion proposed in the plan will be designed and built incrementally based on documented historic use, current use and anticipated use patterns and will be done in the most environmentally friendly manner that is feasible.

Comment: Parking Near the Sound

Develop a parking area near the Sound, but not a large lot.

Response:

A parking area already exists near the Sound (the Fisherman's Lot).

Comment: Northwest Parking

Do not develop the proposed Northwest parking lot; it is unnecessary. It is difficult to examine the proposed site for the Northwest parking lot. Please provide GPS coordinates so that the public can locate and visit the proposed site. Will this site receive further environmental assessment? During what seasons was the site inspected in ascertaining the environmental impact of the land clearing needed for a parking lot?

Response:

Parking expansion proposed in the plan will be designed and built incrementally based on documented historic use, current use and anticipated use patterns and will be done in the most environmentally friendly manner that is feasible. The Northwest Lot is proposed in the northwest corner of the 50-acre field and is open with no tree clearing needed. Access criteria will be developed during more detailed planning.

Comment: Weir Barn Parking

Please do not develop the proposed Weir Barn lot. This proposed parking area will destroy the sweeping view of the grand entrance to Caumsett of the original design as a country estate for Marshall Field III.

Response:

The parking area will be sited and screened to minimize any impact on views along the former main entrance drive. Construction of the lot will keep parked cars off the shoulder of the road, which will help to protect the landscape and create a safer environment for patrons. Cars and bicycles will be removed from the sides of the road which currently obstructs views and degrades the natural and cultural resources.

Comment: Main Parking Lot Increase

Do not increase the size of the Main Parking lot. Information presented in the Background for Analysis to support an increase in parking does not contain the data needed to justify this proposal. A reference to 2,500 patrons at the park on one Sunday in early spring of 2009 is misleading as it cites patrons rather than number of cars and is for a single day rather than an extended time period. The number of visitor cars entering the parking lot for at least one year should be analyzed to determine the number of parking spaces needed. Additionally, parking lot size should be based on average use and not peak.

Response:

The parking lot plan is conceptual and identifies a potential build-out. Parking expansion proposed in the plan will be designed and built incrementally based on documented historic use, current use and anticipated use patterns and will be done in the most environmentally friendly manner that is feasible.

Comment: Main Parking and Contact Station

The main parking lot and contact station should be as unobtrusive as possible.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Amount of Proposed Parking

You have six designated parking areas. The Grand Canyon has four designated parking areas. I object to the amount of parking facilities proposed.

Response:

Criteria for outlying lots will be developed based on actual and projected needs.

Circulation

Comment: No New Roads

Do not add or open any roads to additional traffic in the park. The addition of access roads and road widening will detract from the sweeping view of the park entrance. This will only add more vehicle traffic for visitors to the park. Park roads should only be used for special events or close the main road to vehicle use and use a shuttle during peak times (May-October). Keep the park in as natural a state as possible with the roads used for pedestrians and bikers.

Response:

Vehicular access proposed in the plan will be designed and built incrementally based on documented historic use, current use and anticipated use patterns and will be done in the most environmentally friendly manner that is feasible. The proposed circulation changes will provide a separation between vehicles and pedestrians and improve the overall user experience.

Comment: Increased Vehicular Access

Given OPRHP's goal of sustainability, increasing car access is not justified or consistent as presented.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Electric Cart Use

No consideration seems to have been given to having several electric cart vehicles that people with disabilities can rent. Another acceptable alternative would be to have jitney carts available on weekends.

Response:

This alternative was considered during the planning process and can be found in the Master Plan in Chapter 5: Analysis and Alternatives.

Comment: Driving within the Park

The addition of traffic going to and from parking lots will upset the peaceful experience of the park and give the park a more commercial feel. It will also conflict with the goal of attracting more nesting birds and other wildlife. For both these reasons, allowing patrons to drive in the park would destroy the unique character of Caumsett.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Do Not Change Traffic Flow

The current traffic flow for the equestrian facility is working out just fine. It should not be changed. The proposed road is unnecessary.

Response:

Bull Pen Road will not be developed; however, traffic in and out of the equestrian facility will be rerouted to create a more pedestrian friendly environment in the park.

Comment: Limit Main House Parking Area Use

A direct but carefully controlled and monitored / motor vehicle connection to the Main House and its existing parking area would be acceptable under special daily or extended permit for handicapped persons.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Stone Gutters along Entrance Road

The road leading up from the service entrance on Lloyd Neck Road contains the original stone gutters. The current plan will destroy the gutters and hill summit view of the farm group vista with additional parking lots. Do not add a landscaped median.

Response:

The proposed improvements to the existing entrance road were carefully evaluated during the planning process. The proposed alterations to the existing entrance road are intended to improve public safety. Historic features, including the entrance gate and cobblestone gutters, will be re-created in the new alignment. The view of the farm group from the top of the hill will not be significantly altered since the parking lots will be located further north. A landscaped median will not run the entire length of the road, it is proposed at the intersection with Lloyd Harbor Road to help separate traffic exiting and entering the park.

Trails

Comment: Spider Trails

Do not close “spider trails.” These trails should, when not directly threatening wildlife, positively remain open – many, in fact, are precisely the trails of greatest interest for birders, photographers and many hikers.

Response:

Spider and social trails are trails that were not designed by OPRHP, but by park patrons. Many of these trails do not meet the NYS trail standards and are difficult to maintain. As a result, some trails have been recommended for closure. There are a number of undesignated trails that will remain open for use but will not be part of the designated loop trail system (see Figure 24). Unsustainable trails or trail sections and trails that lead to adjacent private property will be closed. Some trail closures will provide larger trail-less habitat areas for wildlife.

Comment: Fresh Pond Trails

Do not re-route trails around Fresh Pond. It’s unnecessary.

Response:

As stated in the plan, the trails near Fresh Pond are being re-routed away from the pond’s edge to protect the pond and its ecosystem.

Comment: Multi-Use vs. Single Use Trails

There is a concern that Alternative 2 means that trails will be designated for single uses. As a result, horseback riders, bicyclists and walkers would each have fewer trails available to them, whereas now most trails, except those in the northern reaches of the park, are open to all activities. Given the safety record to date, there is no reason to make such a change.

Response:

Hiking (including walking/running) and biking will be allowed on all trails within the park. Equestrian use will be designated on the two loop and connector trails (see Figure 25) as well as designated open field areas, and on any unpaved trails except those in the northern reaches of the park. The plan designates trails in the park for specific uses; this was done to provide a sustainable and organized trail system.

Comment: Equestrian Trail Use

All trails should be open for equestrian use. Do not restrict access. Access should be equal for all users.

Response:

The trails available for equestrian use have not changed dramatically from the status quo. Horses are still not allowed on paved roads and the Master Plan designates certain trails for equestrian use (mostly existing bridle trails) and others for hiking and biking. All undesignated trails are open for equestrian, hiking and biking.

Comment: Cross-country Skiing

Please identify and designate cross-country skiing trails.

Response:

The entire trail system is open for cross-country skiing during the winter if there is snow. These trails are not groomed, however.

Equestrian

Comment: Beach Access

Please allow horses on the beach.

Response:

Horses are not allowed on the beach because they pose a threat to the sensitive ecological community found there. This is explained in the Chapters 3 and 5 of the Master Plan.

Comment: Equestrian Events

I found your report to be highly negative towards the equestrian community. You forgot to list the annual event known as the Hunter's Pace that occurs at the park in your list of "annual events."

Response:

The Master Plan was not intended to be "highly negative" towards any user group. Both the trail maps and the language in the trail section of the Master Plan have been modified to better show and explain the improvements to the trail system of the park. The Hunter's Pace was not included as it is an event sponsored by the concessionaire. However, the plan now reflects that the concessionaire holds several equestrian events throughout the year.

Comment: Expand Equestrian Center

Allow for the expansion of the equestrian center so that a riding school and riding for handicapped can be developed. There should be some flexibility with expanding beyond the existing footprint of the non-historic barns; a walkway between the Yellow Barn and the Indoor Riding Arena would be a huge improvement.

Response:

The expansion of the equestrian center was discussed during the planning process. Please refer to the "Polo Stables" section of Chapter 5 in the Master Plan for a description of the considerations for this alternative.

Comment: Indoor Riding Area

Please do not take away the non-historic buildings; it's imperative to have an indoor riding area for the horses so that people can ride all year round.

Response:

The master plan does not propose to remove the non-historic buildings associated with the equestrian center. The plan identifies two alternatives to make these modern buildings more compatible with the estate's historic architectural design. One alternative is to replace the buildings entirely; the other is to modify the exterior facades (keeping the structure essentially intact).

Cultural Resources

Comment: Preserve Caumsett as a Country Estate

The park has deteriorated and has been maintained with short-sighted fixes that were not in the interest of the preservation of Caumsett as a country estate. The architectural and archaeological aspects of the park and the historic buildings should be restored in accordance with the original Caumsett plan if possible and should not be altered for the sake of generating more money for New York State.

Response:

Comment noted.

Comment: Cemetery Preservation

I urge you to consider devoting a part of your effort to further research, exploration, and preservation of these largely unknown and important cemeteries. They are culturally significant and in danger of complete loss, because many of the stone fragments are underground. One of the cemeteries may possibly hold the burial plot of Jupiter Hammon, the famous African-American poet. Some stones are ornate (but broken and hidden) and date to the late 1600s.

Response:

The small cemetery located in the southeast corner of the park is actually an in-holding that is owned by the Town of Huntington. Nevertheless, the plan recommends the development of an archeological Phase 1A study. This study will help gather additional information regarding the burial plots of the park.

List of Persons/Organizations Providing Comment

Henry Babcock, The Caumsett Foundation

Jeff Bartels

Mike Beganskas

Sue Beganskas

Jen Bernstein

Jim Brown

Stephen Burke

Tim Buxton

Bill Cadden

Dorothea Cappadona, Conservation Board of the Village of Lloyd Harbor

Anthony Caserta

Sandra D. Chmelev

Anne Coneys

Michael Donahower

Vanessa Duve-Bros

George Fisher

Stacy Frank

Renee Freilicher

Sheldon Freilicher

Florian Fueser

Ken Fuestal

Deborah Greenwood

Robert Grunder

Marcy Hyman

Edwin Jakubowski

Tim Jurik

Jon L. Kachmar, The Nature Conservancy

Daniel Karpen

Jeff Klaverweiden, Long Island Antique Power Association

Alan Klein

Barbara Lapidus

Gregory Linakis, Lloyd Harbor Planning Board Member

Carol LoBue

Al Martinez

Tish McCrea

Frank Messina

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Jennifer Murray

J. Sue Nestor

Mary Normandia

Kevin O'Shea

Donald Patrick

Janice Raber

Marie Regan

Charles Reina

Pete Roesch

Barbara Roux

Seymour Spiegel

Sandra Vaux

Michael Vitti

Jessica Weil

Brien Weiner

Michael Whiteside

Ruth Whiteside

John D. Williams

Kimberly Williams