



York Factory

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

SEPTEMBER 1986

MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROGRAM

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

We wish to thank everyone who contributed their time and effort in the second and final phase of public participation for the York Factory Management Planning Process. Your participation has been valuable. This newsletter summarizes your comments and concerns as expressed at the meetings, in the questionnaires and written submissions. It follows the sequence of issues and alternatives outlined in the Newsletter No. 4. Please consult a copy as a reference to this update or contact us to receive another newsletter.

Last spring, Environment Canada, Parks issued York Factory Newsletter No. 4 (March, 1986) which outlined the two plan alternatives developed for the site. A postage-paid mailback questionnaire was included with the newsletter and readers were invited to submit their comments and opinions.

As well, in April 1986, five public meetings took place in Winnipeg, Churchill, Thompson, Gillam and The Pas. Environment Canada, Parks' representatives, including a Cree translator, travelled to six native communities known to have ancestral ties with York Factory's "Home Guard" Swampy Cree Indians in Northern Manitoba. Approximately 240 people participated in the meetings.

Written briefs were received from the Association of Manitoba Archaeologists and the Manitoba Historical Society. In addition to the questionnaires and briefs, correspondence came from individuals whose keen interest in the site was evident in their letters.

ISSUE STATEMENTS

Riverbank Erosion

The majority of comments received from the questionnaires and meet-

ings stated that riverbank erosion remained the primary issue at York Factory. A solution to stabilize the shoreline should be established as soon as possible; "...there is no point in putting a lot of resources into a site that will disappear quickly." The most popular suggested method was the installation of a breakwater system such as rip-rap or banking logs on the shore similar to the approach taken by the Shamattawa community. Although it was recognized that transportation of required materials to the site for any solution would be difficult, many ideas were offered. Some of these ideas are outlined later in the Visitor Services Objectives.

Game Branch Enclave

There was essentially no opposition expressed with respect to Parks' proposal to acquire the parcel of provincial land currently owned by the Department of Natural Resources. Many people mentioned that the proposed use of the buildings on-site to house visitors or staff was appropriate. It was suggested that the two buildings, because of their "out of character" appearance, should be upgraded or considered for relocation.

York Factory Cemetery

The public commentary agreed with Environment Canada, Parks' plans to stabilize the York Factory cemetery by the installation of a drainage system. They also suggested that Parks continue to document the history of the cemetery area and implement public access through willow clearing and a network of boardwalks.

At the outset of the planning program, the concern was raised that erosion along Sloop Creek might result in the exposure of human remains and the release of disease-causing pathogens. These legitimate concerns have been addressed by the recommendations of a cemetery consultative committee.



The Depot building.



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Regional Integration

Overall, respondents agreed with Parks' initiatives to explore the potential of cooperative activities with other provincial and federal agencies. "Given the remote site of York Factory, this cooperation is both logical, essential..."

Although there was support for the nomination of the Cape Churchill Wildlife Management Area as a World Heritage Site, many people questioned the implications for the region if the designation were to proceed.

There was also public support for the investigation of the construction of a *landing strip*. Several suggestions were made as to the type and location of an airstrip appropriate for the York Factory area.

People recognized that the Norway House – York Factory river corridor, including the Oxford House area, held considerable potential for development; "The possibility of providing a heritage river route...is exciting." The entire *Hayes River system* was seen as a very important resource. It was suggested that historic research on this historic transportation route and its existing artifacts should be carried out, as well as biophysical research on the wildlife, geology and botany of the river.

The issue of cooperative tourism marketing generated relatively equal support and opposition. Comments such as "joint-marketing is important" and "[I am] outrightly opposed to the marketing of tourism for the area" were recorded.

Interest in heritage preservation in the region was not limited to York Factory. Many people expressed concern about nearby Port Nelson because of its historical importance and derelict condition. It was suggested that Parks incorporate this site in the York Factory plans. In addition, concern was expressed about deterioration of the following sites and associated artifacts outside the boundaries of York Factory:

- Rock House Depot,
- Robinson Falls,
- Whitemud Creek,
- Logan's Depot – Swampy Lake,
- Ten Shilling Goose Camp, and
- the Anglican Church remains adjacent to the southern boundary of the site.

Finally, participants in the northern public meetings suggested that northern residents form a "Friends of York Factory" cooperative association to assist in the development at York Factory.

PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The public response supported Alternative Two, "The More Accessible Regional Heritage Resource" option as the more appropriate approach for the development and management of the historic site.

Historic Resource Protection Objectives

The stabilization treatments cited in both alternatives were supported by the public. In addition, on-going archaeology at York Factory was a requirement in the response of many people; "...[we] would like to see a commitment from Parks that this program [salvage archaeology] would be in operation every year..."

Interpretation Objectives

Most comments contained ideas for enhancing the interpretive program at the site. These included:

- ground signage and more on-site pamphlets;
- boat rides to other nearby sites;
- creation of an artifact museum with staff in period costumes;
- recreation of the vegetable garden which once existed in front of the Depot building; and
- tours emphasizing the natural history aspects.

Natural Resource Management Objectives

The proposal to install the historical boardwalk system to transport visitors over critical resource areas and thereby limit damage, received support from the public. The stabilization of the drainage system for the site was also endorsed as a worthwhile development. A factor mentioned on a few occasions, however, was the adverse effect beaver activity in the adjacent area would have on any resurrected site drainage system.

Visitor Service Objectives

Support for the provision of emergency shelter was expanded to include overnight accommodation for visitors. Converting the Game Branch buildings to hostel-like accommodation was suggested as well. Camping on-site was not a popular solution to accommodation. People stated that visitor safety could not be assured by Environment Canada, Parks because of bear activity in the area.

Although lack of access to the site received the most public commentary, people were divided as to whether it was an advantage or disadvantage. York Factory enthusiasts provided many solutions with respect to the transportation of both visitors and supplies to the site. Some of these were:

- creating a sled-train or a cat-train on the old railbed in the area;
- using the Nelson or the Hayes rivers;
- constructing a road from Gillam; and
- chartering boats and planes on a regular basis.

Site Operation Objectives

Most comments supported the recommendations of both alternatives such as improved on-site communication and permanent year-round site security; "It would be irresponsible to promote the site without permanent on-site security". Another recommendation which received favourable comment was York Factory's requirement for effective fire protection, particularly in the area of the Depot building.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

With the final round of public consultation behind us, Environment Canada, Parks can now include *your comments and opinions* in the management plan for York Factory National Historic Site. The planning team is now meeting to draft this final plan.

When this York Factory Management Plan is reviewed and approved by the Minister responsible for Environment Canada, Parks, a plan summary will be published and sent to you. Thank you for your commitment and involvement in the planning program for this nationally significant heritage resource.

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en français.

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