

STATUS REPORT ON THE LOWELL NATIONAL PARK

A compromise reached March 8, 1978 between Congressman Paul Tsongas and the National Park Service (NPS) is expected to result in the creation of a "Lowell National Historical Park."

The Lowell legislation should be approved by this summer. Funding is anticipated in October.

MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The NPS would acquire five properties and lease a portion of a sixth within the historic core area. Within this area NPS would also have the ability to make agreements for interpretation and access. Within the entire park NPS could make technical assistance available to public or private entities.

The Lowell National Historical Park Commission would formulate a management plan for the park, excluding NPS sites. First priority would be to undertake activities which would compliment NPS efforts to recreate a restored 19th century setting in the historic core area. The Commission's plan would also provide for preservation and re-use of additional historic structures through acquisition, easements, agreements, grants, and loans. The Commission could contract with the state, city, public and private organizations for services including transportation for the park.

The Commission would consist of local, federal, and state members appointed by the Secretary from recommendations of the following:

- Local - 3 recommendations by the City Manager of Lowell
(7) 3 recommendations by the Mayor of Lowell
1 recommendation by the President of Lowell University
- Federal- 1 recommendation by the Secretary of Transportation
(5) 1 recommendation by the Secretary of Housing and
Urban Development
1 recommendation by the Secretary of Commerce
2 recommendations by the Secretary of Interior
- State - 3 recommendations by the Governor of Massachusetts
(3)

The Commission would have staff and operating money. Capital funds would be available through NPS non-matching grants. The Commission's development plan would have to be approved by the NPS.

The (State) Department of Environmental Management would continue operation of the \$10 million Lowell Heritage State Park, expanding activities and entering into cooperative management agreements with NPS and the Commission. The Heritage Park focuses on the canals and rivers in Lowell. Heritage Park planning has occurred with national park plans in mind. Cooperative agreements are anticipated in the development of transportation systems and NPS interpretation at state-owned canal sites.

The City of Lowell will continue to undertake programs in the downtown and neighborhoods based on the national park theme. The city planning agency will assist in the development of standards and criteria and assist the Commission in devising a park management plan.

BOUNDARIES

The outer boundaries of the park would be the same as proposed by the original Lowell Commission and contained in H.R. 10970. Previously, an inner zone, defined as the "Intensive Use Zone", would have been the sole responsibility of NPS. While this zone would no longer have a defined boundary line, this historic core would still be the area of prime concentration. Now both the NPS and Commission would be responsible for recreating this cross-section of 19th century Lowell. The State's visitor center and major canal rehabilitation would also be located in this area.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The NPS will acquire five structures for the purpose of preserving, restoring, managing, maintaining, and developing Lowell's historic and cultural resources. These include:

1. Merrimack Gatehouse - exhibits on water power and the canal system
2. Old City Hall - exhibits and cultural activities relating to Lowell's people, including 19th century commercial activities, and a restored council chambers for public meetings
3. Linus Childs Agent's House - exhibits on corporate residences for mill agents
4. Boott Mill Boarding House - recreated mill girl boarding house
5. Wannalancit Mill - living exhibit on industrial technology, hydro power, and working in the mills

A sixth structure, the Lowell Manufacturing Company will be under a lease agreement so that a portion of the property can be used as the main NPS visitor's center and orientation area.

The Commission will be responsible for a park management plan within 18 months of the availability of funds. The plan will detail a development strategy for the historic core area, as well as the remainder of the park. The NPS will have final approval power.

While the Commission is not mandated to utilize specific structures, it will be directed to follow the guidelines and responsibilities established by the original Lowell Commission.

Expanded powers include development duties in the historic core area and the responsibility for entering into agreement with the state, city, public, or private entities to provide transportation services throughout the park. Additional NPS grants will be provided to fund these new responsibilities.

The Commission is also responsible for establishing a historic property and district index. This list will be used to identify eligible loan properties. The City will also use the index as a means of notifying the Commission when building permits or zoning variances are proposed for historic properties.

The Commission is empowered to:

- acquire land by eminent domain only in the historic core area (the former intensive use zone)
- acquire land throughout the park by full fee or through the purchase of easements
- enter into agreements to preserve and maintain properties
- provide grants to restore, preserve, and maintain properties
- enter into an agreement with the Lowell Finance and Development Corporation (chartered under state law) to provide low-interest loans to indexed property owners for preservation purposes. \$750,000 would be available to the Development Corporation for a 35-year period. That sum would eventually be returned to the U.S. Treasury. The Commission would develop guidelines and have design approval powers prior to the granting of any loan.
- enter into agreement to provide services
- provide funds to encourage and establish educational and cultural programs
- provide technical assistance

ENFORCEMENT

Within the historic core area the NPS and Commission would devise standards and criteria for the construction, restoration, preservation, alteration, and use of all properties.

Within the remainder of the park, the Commission, with the advice of the State and the NPS, and with the consent of the City will establish standards and criteria.

The NPS and the Commission would then provide necessary technical assistance so that the City, within one year, could formulate zoning for the park to reflect these standards and criteria. If the NPS and Commission fail to approve such zoning, they have the right to withhold park funds. In addition, failure of the City to notify the Commission of pending building permits or zoning variances for established index properties can also result in withholding of funds.

COSTS

It is estimated that NPS capital costs will be approximately ~~\$12-15~~ million.
18.5

It is estimated that Commission capital costs will be approximately ~~\$22-25~~ million.
21.5

A complete cost analysis is now underway.