

# Center for State of the Parks



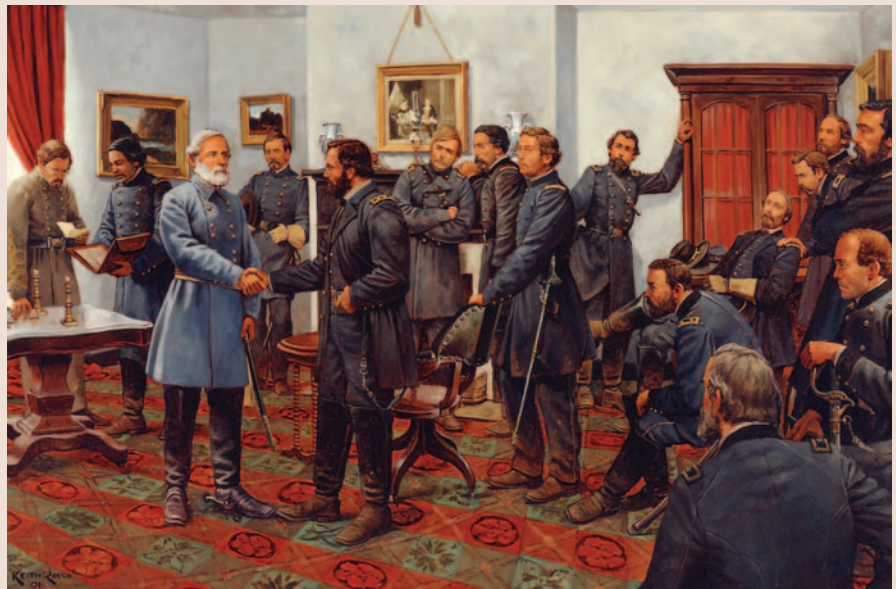
## APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

### SNAPSHOT

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park in Virginia interprets the location where Robert E. Lee, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, accepted the terms of surrender from Union Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865. The 1,743-acre park includes historic structures such as the house in which the generals met to discuss and sign the surrender, furnishings and other historical artifacts dating to the Civil War, and more than 1,700 acres of woodlands, agricultural fields, and grasslands. In 2007, more than 149,000 people visited the park.

### CHALLENGES

- The park has lost nine seasonal and permanent staff positions since 2001 due to budget constraints and has found it difficult to secure funds for any new staff positions. Needed positions include, but are not necessarily limited to, an archivist, a museum technician, three permanent maintenance workers, a building trades professional, law enforcement rangers, interpretive rangers, and biological technicians.
- At current funding and staffing levels, the park is unable to fully execute certain natural and cultural resource projects, including invasive plant



KEITH ROCCO, COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The Park Service commissioned well-known artist Keith Rocco to produce a historically accurate depiction of the surrender at Appomattox Court House.

- control, cultural landscape management, water quality monitoring, biological surveys, and management of the agricultural leasing program.
- To enable the park to expand interpretation to include the entire cultural landscape, and to explore the roles of African Americans and women in the development of Appomattox Court House before, during, and after the Civil War, additional historic resource studies are needed.
- The park has adequate storage space in its curatorial facility for current needs, but lacks room for future acquisitions. There is not enough

space for exhibits, and some exhibit spaces lack the proper protection. To address this challenge, the most fragile and significant items are stored and exhibited in locations with the best protective environments. The park has one main curatorial facility with temperature and humidity controls, new light fixtures, and no windows to let in sunlight that could damage fragile items. A few of the park's exhibits have Plexiglas enclosures, which offer protection from dust, dirt, and insect damage. Items in other exhibit spaces would benefit from this level of protection. A lack of fire suppression throughout the storage and exhibit areas is also of serious concern.



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- Poaching of historical artifacts is a concern at Appomattox Court House, and while Park Service staff are unable to quantify the scope of the poaching that occurs at the park, the occasional discovery of holes in outlying areas of the park is an indication of this illegal activity. Poaching of deer is also suspected, as stands used by hunters have also been found within the park.
- Virginia State Route 24 is a high-speed, two-lane highway that bisects the park. This road essentially cuts off the southern side of the park to visitors and creates a deadly barrier for wildlife. Traffic noise disrupts interpretive programs and diminishes the character of the mid-19th-century historical landscape the park is trying to preserve. Potential options to mitigate these problems include installing traffic-calming measures on the stretch of road that passes through the park and lowering the speed limit, to rerouting State Route 24.
- Since the 1940s, the park has leased land to farmers for cattle grazing and hay production, in order to maintain the landscape's 1860s agricultural character. However, grazing has damaged native plants, increased the presence of non-native plant species, and degraded the water quality of the park's streams. Staff have taken measures to reduce the impact of cattle on park resources by decreasing the number of acres that are grazed, decreasing the number of cattle per acre, and constructing fences to keep cattle away from streams.

#### WHAT'S BEING DONE

- The living history program at Appomattox Court House is excel-

lent. Staff in full period costumes engage visitors with their portrayals of historical figures. The park's interpretive staff are widely recognized for their knowledge of and expertise in portraying figures related to the Civil War, the Appomattox Campaign, and the events associated with the surrender at Appomattox Court House in April 1865.

- Appomattox Court House National Historical Park created a natural resources program in 2000. Since then, staff have converted 70 acres of fields into native grasslands that provide improved habitat for native wildlife and reflect the landscape that soldiers saw during the final days of the Civil War. Staff have also treated invasive non-native plants on more than 700 additional acres and have succeeded in achieving significant reductions of these plants.
- Appomattox Court House recently installed several new interpretive exhibits at the visitor center. One exhibit features artifacts related to Lieutenant A. Wellborn Moise. Originally a member of the 1st Maryland Cavalry, he was commended for bravery during the Gettysburg campaign and was serving as a lieutenant in the 26th Georgia Infantry at the surrender. The park also has an exhibit on the participation of African-American troops at Appomattox Court House and has plans to create new exhibits on slavery and emancipation.
- The park contracted the services of an outside professional to help process and organize some of the park's archives. This contractor organized archival materials, placed them in protective folders, labeled them, and created finding aids to

assist staff and researchers in locating items.

#### ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

#### CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at [jnations@npca.org](mailto:jnations@npca.org).

For more information on Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, contact NPCA's Senior Program Manager Catharine Gilliam at 540.886.6722 or [cgilliam@npca.org](mailto:cgilliam@npca.org), or visit the park online at [www.nps.gov/apco](http://www.nps.gov/apco). To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit [www.npca.org/take\\_action](http://www.npca.org/take_action).