



YELLOW BLUFF FORT HISTORIC STATE PARK

Park Chapter

ATLANTIC COAST REGION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park

Park Chapter

Introduction	1
Location and Acquisition History	1
Secondary and Incompatible Uses	1
Purpose and Significance of the Park	2
Other Designations	3
Park Accomplishments	3
 Resource Management Component	 4
Topography	4
Soils	4
Natural Communities	7
Invasive Species	9
Cultural Resources	10
Special Management Considerations	14
 Land Use Component	 15
Visitation	15
Existing Facilities and Infrastructure	15
Conceptual Land Use Plan	16
Optimum Boundary	18

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park

Planning Region: Atlantic Coast

County: Duval

Lease/Management Agreement Number: 3646

Overview: Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park protects the Yellow Bluff Fort and the site of previous encampments used in the Civil War. This site protects the only known remaining component of the Civil War defenses constructed in and around Jacksonville.

Total Acreage: 1.74

Natural Communities	Acres
Xeric Hammock	0.17

Altered Landcover	Acres
Developed	1.56

Acquisition: Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park was initially acquired on September 12, 1950, as a donation from the North Shore Corporation. In 1955, the Board of County Commissioners of Duval County vacated a portion of Soloman Road, which was subsequently added to the park. Currently, the park comprises 1.72 acres. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold fee simple title to the park and on January 23, 1968, the Trustees leased (Lease Number 3646) the property to DRP under a 99-year lease. The current lease will expire on January 22, 2067.

Resource Management Component

Natural Communities

- Conduct natural community improvement activities on .1 acres of xeric hammock community. Discontinue mowing of path in xeric hammock.

Invasive and Nuisance Species

- Annually treat .03 acres of invasive plant species.

Cultural Resources

- Assess/evaluate the recorded cultural resources in the park (Yellow Bluff Fort, DU0123).
- Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources. Improve park's interpretation of the fort's history.
- Bring 3 of 3 recorded cultural resources into good condition including the earthworks, cannons, and monument.

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park

Land Use Component

Conceptual Land Use

Park Boundary

- Encourage native vegetative buffering to screen adjacent properties.

Entrance

- Install interpretation near the park entrance.
- Prevent makeshift paths on the historic landscape.

Parking Area

- Level, repave, and organize parking lot.

Optimum Boundary

One parcel, approximately 47 acres is proposed for the optimum boundary of Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park. A part of the Florida Master Site File, this parcel has the potential to 1) increase recreational opportunities by interpreting this area's history regarding its role in the American Civil War, 2) preserve the historic landscape and any collected cultural resources, 3) restore the land and prevent future development in an already heavily industrialized area, 4) increase habitats that have been fragmented in the past, and 5) provide more greenspace and the chance to interpret past activities along the St. Johns River.

TO I-295/
JACKSONVILLE

STATE AVE

OLYMPIA AVE

NEW BERLIN RD

LOMBARDO AVE

PAT RD

IRVING RD

APOLLO AVE

FREDERICK ST

XERIC
HAMMOCK

Loop Nature Trail

Monument

EARTHWORKS

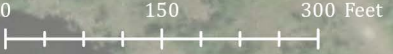
Parking
Lot

PARK FEATURES

-  Park Boundary
-  Trails



YELLOW BLUFF FORT HISTORIC STATE PARK
DUVAL COUNTY, FLORIDA



St. Johns River

INTRODUCTION

LOCATION AND ACQUISITION HISTORY

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is located in Duval County. Access to the park is from New Berlin Road by way of Heckscher Drive. The Atlantic Coast Region Map also reflects significant land and water resources existing near the park.

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park was initially acquired on Sept. 12, 1950, as a donation from the North Shore Corporation. In 1955, the Board of County Commissioners of Duval County vacated a portion of Soloman Road, which was subsequently added to the park. Currently, the park comprises 1.72 acres. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold fee simple title to the park and on Jan. 23, 1968, the Trustees leased (Lease No. 3646) the property to the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) under a 99-year lease. The current lease will expire on Jan. 22, 2067.

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is designated single-use to provide public outdoor recreation and conservation. There are no legislative or executive directives that constrain the use of this property (see appendix). A legal description of the park property can be made available upon request to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection DEP).

SECONDARY AND INCOMPATIBLE USES

In accordance with 253.034(5) F.S., the potential of the park to accommodate secondary management purposes was analyzed. These secondary purposes were considered within the context of DRP's statutory responsibilities and resource values. This analysis considered the park's natural and cultural resources, management needs, aesthetic values, visitation, and visitor experiences. It was determined that no secondary purposes could be accommodated in a manner that would not interfere with the primary purpose of resource-based outdoor recreation and conservation.

DRP has determined that uses such as, water resource development projects, water supply projects, stormwater management projects, linear facilities and sustainable agriculture and forestry (other than those management activities specifically identified in this plan) would not be consistent with the management purposes of the park.

In accordance with 253.034(5) F.S., the potential for generating revenue to enhance management was also analyzed. Because of the location and small size of the park, the park does not charge any visitor fees. It was determined that multiple-use management activities would not be appropriate as a means of generating revenues for land management. Generating revenue from consumptive uses or from activities that are not expressly related to resource management and conservation is not under consideration.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARK

Park Purpose

The purpose of Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is to protect the site of previous encampments used in the Civil War and educate Florida residents and visitors about the history of Florida and the role this part of the state played in the war.

Park Significance

- The park protects the Yellow Bluff Fort, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The site is significant as the only known remaining component of the Civil War defenses constructed in and around Jacksonville.
- The park protects the remaining physical evidence of the original earthwork fortifications Confederate forces constructed on the bluff in order to establish artillery positions along the river at strategic locations in an attempt to deny invading Union gunboats access to the St. Johns River.
- The site is significant to African American history. Companies of the 8th U.S. Colored Troops, 34th U.S. Colored Troops and the 54th Massachusetts were all stationed at Yellow Bluff at various times in 1864.

Central Park Theme

Strategically positioned to protect the St. Johns River during the Civil War, the earthen fortifications at Yellow Bluff were occupied by both sides of the conflict, including some of the first African American regiments.

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is classified as a special feature site in the DRP unit classification system. A special feature is a discrete and well-defined object or condition that attracts public interest and provides recreational enjoyment through visitation, observation, and study. A state special feature site is an area which contains such a feature, and which is set aside for controlled public enjoyment. Special feature sites for the most part are either historical or archaeological by type, but they may also have a geological, botanical, zoological, or other basis. State special feature sites must be of unusual or exceptional character or have statewide or broad regional significance.

Management of special feature sites places primary emphasis on protection and maintenance of the special feature for long-term public enjoyment. Permitted uses are almost exclusively passive in nature and program emphasis is on interpretation of the special feature. Development at special feature sites is focused on protection and maintenance of the site, public access, safety, and the convenience of the user.

OTHER DESIGNATIONS

The unit is not within an Area of Critical State Concern as defined in Section 380.05, Florida Statutes, and it is not presently under study for such designation. The park is a component of the Florida Greenways and Trails System, administered by the DEP Office of Greenways and Trails.

There are no surface waters located within the park boundaries. This park is adjacent to Fort Clinch State Park Aquatic Preserve, as designated under the Florida Aquatic Preserve Act of 1975 (Section 258.35, Florida Statutes).

PARK ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Cannons and bases cleaned, and protectant applied for preservation (2019).
- Mowing of grounds altered to allow vegetation to grow and secure eroding areas of park (ongoing).
- Exotics treated annually (ongoing).
- New entrance sign added to park grounds to identify as a state park (2020).

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park Management Zones			
Management Zone	Acreage	Managed with Prescribed Fire	Contains Known Cultural Resources
YB-1	1.72	N	Y

TOPOGRAPHY

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is located in the Coastal Lowlands physiographic zone of the Atlantic Coastal Plain, just south of a section of the southeastern United States coast known as the Sea Islands (White 1970). The 1.72-acre park sits atop a low, wooded sandy ridge overlooking the St. Johns River. The natural topography of the site was radically altered during the Civil War when the Confederate army constructed earthwork fortifications there. Trenches from those earthworks persist at the site today. Elevations range from five feet above mean sea level (msl) within the excavated earthworks to 20 feet msl at the southwest boundary of the park.

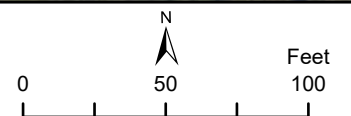
SOILS

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the only soils found at Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park are Lynn Haven fine sand and Ortega fine sand (NRCS, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 1998) (see Soils Map). The Lynn Haven soil covers almost the entire site. The classification of the chief soil type at Yellow Bluff Fort as Lynn Haven sand represents a major departure from its former identification as Kershaw fine sand (Soil Conservation Service, USDA 1978). Unfortunately, the reclassification from Kershaw to Lynn Haven seems to be in error. Kershaw fine sand is an excessively drained soil that occurs on gently sloping broad ridges and isolated knolls. The Yellow Bluff Fort site, despite considerable historical disturbance, retains significant elements of its original nature, including an elevated topography and a well-drained sandy soil. These characteristics place it at the opposite end of the spectrum from Lynn Haven soils, which drain very poorly and occur on flats and in seepage areas. Perhaps interpretation of aerial photography resulted in misidentification of the deeply excavated earthworks as wetland depressions. The previous classification of the Yellow Bluff Fort soil by the NRCS as Kershaw fine sand seems a much more appropriate choice. Nevertheless, the 1998 NRCS soils classification for the Yellow Bluff Fort site is still the official version, therefore it is used in this management plan. The appendix contains complete descriptions of Lynn Haven and Ortega fine sand.

Limited soil erosion currently occurs in the park, primarily at the bases of some of the larger oaks. An old sand live oak at the northwest edge of the trench system is in danger of toppling if erosion at its base continues unabated. Persistent human actions such as digging and climbing have accelerated the erosion. Staff will prevent further impacts to the tree by redirecting visitors away from the tree and monitor the condition of the tree. If it shows signs of decline or falling, it will be professionally removed. The steep slopes of the earthworks are susceptible to erosion, but most are now reasonably stable due to dense vegetative growth, particularly yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) and young hardwood trees. Unfortunately, this vegetation tends to obscure the outlines of the trench system, making interpretation of the site problematic. If DRP determines that it would be best to remove the hardwoods to enhance visual aspects of the cultural landscape, then some low-growing substitute groundcover will be needed on the slopes to mitigate the increased erosion that will likely result.



YELLOW BLUFF FORT HISTORIC STATE PARK Management Zones



This graphical representation is provided for informational purposes and should not be considered authoritative for navigational, engineering, legal, and other uses.

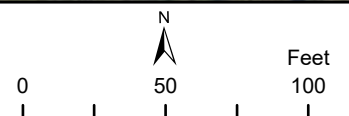


Soils

 35 - Lynn haven fine sand, 0 to 2 percent slopes



YELLOW BLUFF FORT HISTORIC STATE PARK
Soils



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NATURAL COMMUNITIES

Xeric Hammock

A small patch of xeric hammock, currently in two discrete fragments, occupies the southwestern corner of the park. Sand live oak dominates the relatively open canopy. Turkey oak and laurel oak are among the other species present. The mid-story contains widely scattered sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*), wild olive and sweetleaf (*Symplocos tinctoria*). The very sparse groundcover includes Florida Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum floridanum*) and soft greeneyes (*Berlandiera pumila*).

The well-drained sands underlying the park would normally have supported a sandhill community, but the very few sandhill species still present at the site occur mainly outside of the earthworks. Fire exclusion and other human influences at the site over the past 150 years have resulted in the loss of most of the original sandhill and the succession of the small sandhill remnant to xeric hammock. The long-term viability of the small patch of xeric hammock is greatly compromised by the continued dominating presence of the earthworks and by management activities required to maintain picnic facilities and trails within the park. Consequently, the xeric hammock is in poor condition.

The current management of the park, with its goal of maintaining landscape features associated with the Civil War fortifications, continues to hinder normal development of the xeric hammock. At this site, however, the preservation of cultural resources takes precedence over management of natural resources. Still, a minor change in management of the site could benefit the xeric hammock without compromising the integrity of the cultural resources. Ceasing to mow the pathway that currently cuts through the hammock would unite the two fragments of xeric hammock and improve its condition.

DRP staff visits the site periodically. Staff presence at the park is very limited and public access is self-guided and largely unregulated. Consequently, unauthorized footpaths may appear. Park staff will continue to close off unauthorized footpaths as needed. Although invasive plants are not currently established in the xeric hammock, staff will check the community regularly to ensure that no invasives have invaded from neighboring properties.

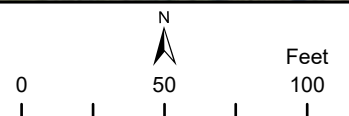
Altered Land Cover Type

Developed

Developed areas at Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park include the remnant earthworks of Confederate fortifications dating back to 1862 and a small parking area with a commemorative obelisk. The earthworks have endured a significant amount of unauthorized and damaging uses over the years. While the site has improved greatly in the past decade, minor erosion continues on some of the trench slopes and a few unauthorized footpaths persist. Management measures for the earthworks will include erosion control as needed and the elimination of unauthorized footpaths. A considerable number of trees and shrubs grow on “islands” of higher ground within the trench system. Among the more common species are southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), laurel oak, cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) and yaupon. Several species of invasive plants were once well established in the earthworks portion of the park. Staff regularly treats these species with herbicide.



YELLOW BLUFF FORT HISTORIC STATE PARK Natural Communities



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Improvement

Objective: Conduct natural community improvement activities on 0.1 acres of xeric hammock.

Actions:

- Discontinue mowing of pathway in xeric hammock.

Currently, the xeric hammock in the park consists of two small patches separated by a wide mowed pathway. Staff should discontinue the practice of mowing the pathway to merge the fragments.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive plant species recorded in the park during the past decade include mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), air-potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) and camphortree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), all classified by the Florida Invasive Species Council (FISC) as Category I invasive plants, plus Caesarweed (*Urena lobata*) and Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), both classified by FISC as Category II invasive plants (FISC 2019). Apparently, air-potato and mimosa are the only two species still present. Each requires annual treatment over a multi-year period.

Before 2009, invasive plants in the park received only sporadic herbicide treatment. However, a routine annual treatment program which includes herbicide use has been established. Staff monitors the site to assess the effectiveness of herbicide treatments and to check for possible invasions by additional invasive plants. The staff is also encouraging a cooperative effort with adjacent homeowners to eradicate invasives on their properties.

Invasive Plant Species			
Species Name Scientific Name - Common Name	FISC Category	Distribution	Zone ID
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i> - Mimosa	I	Single Plant or Clump	YB-1
<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> - Camphor-tree	I	Single Plant or Clump, Scattered Plants or Clumps	YB-1
<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i> - Air-potato	I	Single Plant or Clump, Scattered Plants or Clumps	YB-1
<i>Nephrolepis cordifolia</i> - Tuberous sword fern	I	Single Plant or Clump	YB-1
<i>Wisteria sinensis</i> - Chinese wisteria	II	Scattered Dense Patches	YB-1

Invasive Plant Treatment

Objective: Annually treat 0.03 acres of invasive plant species.

Actions:

- Annually treat all known infestations of invasive plant species.
- Conduct a full survey of the park at least biennially to monitor results of previous treatments and to document the appearance of any new invasive infestations.

Because the park has relatively few invasive plants, DRP staff should be able to treat all known infestations annually. If possible, each species should be treated before it begins to reproduce. All local DRP staff should become familiar with the invasive species that occur in the park and should implement the best treatment options available.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Prehistoric and Historic Archaeological Sites

According to the Florida Master Site File (FMSF), the northeast corner of DU00123 (Yellow Bluff Fort), an archaeological site from the American Civil War period, falls within the boundaries of Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park. That corner of DU00123 constitutes the only known cultural site in the park. In 1970, the U.S. Department of Interior added Yellow Bluff Fort to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, a unit of the National Park Service, assigns its own number to the fort, TIMU 96.

Yellow Bluff Fort gained prominence in September 1862, after the Union capture of Fernandina, when Confederate forces constructed fortifications on the bluff to deny invading enemy gunboats access to the St. Johns River (Bearss 1964). The Confederates had established artillery positions along the river at strategic locations such as St. Johns Bluff, on the south bank about 5 miles from the mouth of the river, and at Dames Point, specifically Yellow Bluff Fort, near New Berlin on the north bank of the river. At least some of the Confederate ordnance evacuated from Fernandina was transported to those sites by railroad. The St. Johns Bluff positions were established earlier than those at Yellow Bluff Fort, although neither installation had been completed by the time federal forces began the assault. The Union first attacked with cannon from gunships in the channel and then landed troops to flank the defenders. Neither of the fortifications was able to withstand the Union forces for longer than 20 days.

Yellow Bluff Fort came to notice again late in the Civil War (Nulty 1990). In February 1864, Union forces received orders to build a communications tower “on the blockhouse” at Yellow Bluff Fort. The 110-foot tower, which was among several that the Union forces used to relay communications throughout the area, seems to have remained active until the end of the war. The site faded from public attention shortly afterward.

According to the NRHP nomination form recorded by Randy Nimnicht of the Florida Department of State in March 1971, the Yellow Bluff Fort “fortifications consisted of triangular earthen works dug to provide protection for the guns.” The little physical evidence of Yellow Bluff Fort that persists today consists of an extensive trench system within the boundaries of the park. The trenches are often at least 10 feet deep and in places are 15 feet wide. One may infer that these are the physical remains of the Confederate installation. A June 20, 2012, update to the FMSF, based on shovel-testing and metal detector sweeps during a one-day field visit by Barry Wharton of HDR Engineering, did little to expand knowledge of the site. The field report did note, however, that DU00123 covered about 290,000 square meters, that earth-moving activities had impacted the south portion of the site, that the remainder of the site appeared minimally disturbed, and that only the northeast corner lay within the park.

Although the park has not been the subject of a comprehensive, coordinated cultural resources survey, a predictive model for the site was completed by University of South Florida researchers in 2012 (Collins et al. 2012). Not surprisingly, the archaeological sensitivity model developed for the site resulted in the entire park being designated a high-sensitivity area. Digital Elevation Model (DEM) analysis and GPS data

collected during the modeling exercise revealed that the boundaries of DU00123 as described in the current FMSF listing did not extend far enough to the northeast, in effect excluding the northwest corner of the park. To rectify that, the modeling team submitted an updated FMSF form that added the missing area to the FMSF-listed boundary.

Analysis of historic maps geo-referenced for the park has indicated that there were “related historic landscape sites and features inside and outside the current park boundary” (Collins et al. 2012). Consequently, one can only infer the significance of the trench system within the context of the Confederate installation in its entirety. Details about other significant features of the installation, such as the communications tower, remain obscure. One old photograph purporting to show the communications tower at New Berlin actually reveals a middle distance landscape crowded with multi-story houses and other structures on a scale not usually associated with the area.

Yellow Bluff Fort is in fair condition. The earthworks/trench system appears stable, but human use and misuse over time have in fact caused some significant impacts. Trees, mostly oaks, grow throughout the park, and a few are located on unexcavated islands of higher ground within the trench system. Some of the offspring of these trees are spreading into the trench system. Thickets of yaupon holly are also appearing on the islands and along slopes of the trenches. While this vegetative growth helps stabilize the soils, it also obscures the earthworks to the point that it is becoming difficult to visualize the historical layout of the trenches.

Visitors once used the larger oaks within the trench system as play areas, mainly for climbing and for supporting swings. Those traditional activities, which caused damage to the trees and encouraged erosion of the earthworks, occur much less frequently now. Nevertheless, evidence of past abuse is still visible. At least half the roots of one large sand live oak at the northwest edge of the trench system are exposed and may be in danger of toppling if erosion at its base continues unabated. The best method to stop the erosion and potentially stabilize the tree should be determined and implemented.

A 4-foot-tall chain link fence currently runs along most of the park boundary. Past issues with loss of fence integrity along the 400-foot-long south boundary appear to have been resolved. The unauthorized access that once was prevalent at the southwest corner of the park is apparently no longer an issue. An 80-foot stretch at the formal entrance to the park remains unfenced. Here a series of fence posts set 12-18 inches apart serve as bollards that provide limited protection from entry by wheeled vehicles such as bicycles. In the first several decades of the park’s existence, damage from wheeled vehicles ranging from bicycles to off-road motorcycles was commonplace. However, in recent years, such incidents have become much less frequent due to significant assistance from neighborhood volunteers, who have improved site maintenance and security. Still, the park would greatly benefit from an increased presence of uniformed personnel.

Yellow Bluff Fort is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The site is significant as the only known remaining component of the Civil War defenses constructed in and around Jacksonville. Recent research also has added to this significance for its connection to African American troops stationed there. Companies of the 8th U.S. Colored Troops, 34th U.S. Colored Troops and the 55th Massachusetts were all stationed at Yellow Bluff Fort at various times in 1864, this is significant in African American history.

Professional guidance is needed regarding management of the native hardwoods that are invading the earthworks. Staff will work with the Bureau of Natural and Cultural Resources (BNCR) to develop a management plan. While the root systems of the hardwoods likely help deter erosion on the slopes, they also obscure the outlines of the earthworks and may damage the integrity of the cultural site. The preferred method of dealing with these native invasive species is to cut the young saplings and treat the stumps with herbicide.

There may be other means of preserving the physical remains of Yellow Bluff Fort than merely continuing to maintain the hardwood growth on the earthworks. An action plan to achieve stabilization of the site and prevent further erosion should be developed. It may include limiting access to the earthworks to only a few paths and managing the vegetation, using brush piles to prevent visitors from accessing the most impacted parts of the park, and placing informational panels around the park so visitors can be educated about how to enjoy the park, while also protecting it.

Staff will also redirect visitors' activities to areas outside the earthworks and consider placement of additional boundary barriers designed to prevent access to the site by bicycles and off-road vehicles.

The area west of the park is now occupied by several large parking areas. There is a definite need to protect the remaining aesthetics of the park from impacts of encroaching development. One measure that might help insulate the park from neighboring industrial development would be to maintain a well-vegetated buffer along the western park boundary. Another measure that might protect the viewshed of the park would be to obtain a conservation easement for unimproved property south of the park.

Collections

A low obelisk monument, erected in 1951, marks the site of Yellow Bluff Fort. The monument, donated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, is located at the south edge of the parking lot. A plaque on the monument commemorates the Confederate soldiers who defended Jacksonville during the Civil War. Five cannons mounted on concrete pedestals flank the parking lot and the perimeter of the earthworks. The cannons, which are of inappropriate vintage and are perhaps salvage from shipwrecks, were also donated in the 1950s and appear to be substitutes for genuine ordnance of the Civil War era. The FMSF file for DU00123 contains a data sheet for each cannon where detailed measurements and the condition of each cannon can be found. The park does not have any informal collections.

The commemorative plaque has experienced vandalism by apparent small arms gunfire. According to park neighbors, the incidents occurred prior to the 1990s. The plaque is in fair condition. The cannons, however, are in poor condition. They also appear to have been vandalized, although much of their decline may be attributable to age and chemical reaction with salt. All cannons were in a persistent state of decline until staff treated them with a clear rust inhibitor and painted them with black Rustoleum.

The cannons were installed in 1950s shortly after the park was acquired. While they are of interest, the cannons are of little significance. They are not of the correct period and are severely deteriorated.

Now that the cannons have received a thorough stabilization treatment, they will need periodic reapplication of preservatives to minimize additional weathering. To keep the commemorative plaque from deteriorating, staff should continue the regular maintenance regime that has been in place in recent years. The maintenance regime should be written down and maintained at staff headquarters.

No Scope of Collections Statement has been developed for the park, but a determination should be made regarding whether the cannons are appropriate for the park. If they remain, information regarding the cannons should be incorporated in the interpretive panels that will be placed in the park.

Cultural Sites Listed in the Florida Master Site File					
Site Name and FMSF #	Culture/Period	Description	Significance	Condition	Treatment
DU0123 Yellow Bluff Fort	Historic, Nineteenth century American, 1821-1899, American Civil War	Archaeological Site	NRL	G	P

Significance:

NRL - National Register Listed
NRE - National Register Eligible
LS - Locally Significant
NE - Not Evaluated
NS - Not Significant

Conditions:

G - Good
F - Fair
P - Poor

Recommended Treatment:

RS - Restoration
RH - Rehabilitation
ST - Stabilization
P - Preservation
R - Removal

Condition Assessment

Objective: Assess/evaluate one recorded cultural resource in the park.

Actions:

- Develop and implement a protocol for monthly site assessments.

Staff will develop and follow a routine protocol for site assessments, which should occur at least once a month. Staff will document impacts that may have occurred at Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park such as vandalism, damage from wheeled vehicles (including bicycles), the development of unauthorized footpaths through the earthworks, and erosion. Photo-documentation of significant impacts should be part of the standard procedure. A file of recorded Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park assessments and observations will be maintained at either the Talbot Islands park office or the Pumpkin Hill Creek office.

Documentation of Recorded Sites

Objective: Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources.

Actions:

- Improve interpretation of the fort's history.

The only known cultural site in the park has already been recorded in the FMSF. The site file was updated in 2012 following completion of the predictive model for Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park. If any new sites are discovered in the park, they will be submitted to the Florida Master Site File promptly. The park and its interpretation would benefit from a research project to document the fort's history through historical research and a more in-depth archaeological investigation. The park currently does not have any collections other than the five cannons and the obelisk monument.

Preservation Measures

Objective: Bring three of three recorded cultural resources into good condition.

Actions:

- Continue to implement regular monitoring and maintenance programs for three cultural sites.
- Develop a plan to control the native hardwoods that are invading the earthworks.

Preventing further erosion and deterioration of the earthworks will stabilize the park. Stabilization and prevention of further deterioration will halt decline and the site will then be considered to be in good or fair condition. The park should continue to improve maintenance procedures for the earthworks, cannons, and monument, and should expand maintenance efforts as needed. The park should develop a plan to control the native hardwoods that are invading the earthworks, encroaching on the trench system, and obscuring the outlines of the earthworks. In question is the amount of vegetation that staff would be able to remove while maintaining the earthworks as a viable cultural resource without causing a significant increase in erosion or encouraging a proliferation of unauthorized pathways throughout the site. Research by historic preservationists is needed to determine appropriate methodologies for stabilizing the earthworks with groundcover plants while strictly adhering to established standards for historic structures of this type.

Park staff will develop a plan to redirect visitors to less sensitive portions of the site outside the present footprint of the earthworks. This may be done using brush piles to block access to highly impacted areas. Another protective measure might be to erect additional boundary barriers at the walk-in entrance to the park to prevent access by bicycles and off-road vehicles.

SPECIAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Arthropod Control Plan

All DRP lands are designated as “environmentally sensitive and biologically highly productive” in accordance with Ch. 388 and Ch. 388.4111 Florida Statutes. If a local mosquito control district proposes a treatment plan, the DRP works with the local mosquito control district to achieve consensus. By policy of DEP since 1987, aerial adulticiding is not allowed, but larviciding and ground adulticiding (truck spraying in public use areas) is typically allowed. The DRP does not authorize new physical alterations of marshes through ditching or water control structures.

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park does not have an Arthropod Control Plan. Mosquito control plans temporarily may be set aside under declared threats to public or animal health, or during a Governor’s Emergency Declaration.

LAND USE COMPONENT

VISITATION

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is historically significant for the city of Jacksonville. Since Jacksonville is expected to continue development and experience population growth, this park serves as a window to the past and as protection for Civil War cultural resources. It is one of the only known remaining parts of the Civil War defenses in Jacksonville. These cultural resources are also found outside the park boundary but are developed over by subdivisions, clearings and businesses.

In the past, the construction of defenses along the coast and prominent waterways was significant in protecting vital supply areas in the state. This helps explain why Yellow Bluff was used so close to the St. Johns River. Toward the end of the war, the site was abandoned and forgotten until donated in 1950 to the state, where it became a state park and was preserved for future generations. Now, historic interpretation, picnicking and limited hiking through the trench system are the primary recreational uses within the park.

Trends

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is a low-attended park with most visitation experienced from July through September. In 2018, visitation peaked with most people visiting the park in June. Many people visit the park to sightsee and enjoy peaceful surroundings near the St. Johns River.

Economic Impact

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park recorded 1,342 visitors in FY 2022/2023. By DRP estimates, the FY 2022/2023 visitors contributed \$161,008 in direct economic impact, the equivalent of adding 2 jobs to the local economy (FDEP 2023).

EXISTING FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

When entering the park, there is a five-space parking area including one ADA space, two cannons, one on the left and one on the right, and a low obelisk monument marking the site of the Yellow Bluff Fort. Further in, there are three more cannons surrounding the perimeter and a large picnic area with two picnic tables. Surrounding the earthworks area is a quarter-mile nature trail. Several paths through the original trench system are also available for an immersive experience.

Facilities Inventory

<i>Entrance</i>	
Parking Area (5 spaces)	1
Cannons	2
Monument	1
<i>Earthworks</i>	
Cannons	3
Picnic Tables	2
Nature Trail Mileage	0.25

CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

Park Boundary

Objective: Improve visitors' viewshed.

Actions:

- Provide vegetative buffering.

To improve visitors' viewshed on the eastern boundary, a vegetated screen to buffer any adjacent landowner properties is recommended.

Entrance

Objective: Improve visitors' sense of arrival.

Actions:

- Install interpretation.
- Prevent makeshift paths.

An appropriate interpretive element should be installed to educate visitors about the history and significance of the park and redirect visitors to improved trails, away from makeshift paths. This feature could be installed near the park entrance to educate visitors about the purpose of this park before entering the earthworks area. This element will enhance visitor understanding and stewardship of the earthworks and educate the visitors about the significance of the park in context to its history and the surrounding area.

Bikers and other non-motorized vehicles enter the park, which is not allowed. Many visitors also make unauthorized footpaths, potentially creating erosion issues and limiting vegetation growth. In the past, the park has installed bollards and extra fencing to reduce this issue. Staff should continue to install barriers and appropriate signage as needed to deter people from disturbing the historic landscape (see *Cultural Resources* section for additional details).

Parking Area

Objective: Improve parking lot.

The pavement in the parking area has cracked and eroded, hindering this site's appearance. At least five parking spaces should be leveled and repaved, and five parking curbs should be installed to improve space delineation. When repaving, an apron where the surface is currently eroded should also be paved to avoid further erosion of the new pavement.



Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park

Conceptual Land Use Plan

0 50 100 Feet



OPTIMUM BOUNDARY

Yellow Bluff Fort Historic State Park is in northeast Jacksonville near the mouth of the St. Johns River, in the area known as Dames Point. Just a few miles from Interstate 295, this park is surrounded by industrial and port-related businesses and some older residential homes, reducing the opportunity for conservation and historical interpretation. There is industrial use on the western boundary of the property, residential uses to the north and east, and vacant land adjoining the park to the south.

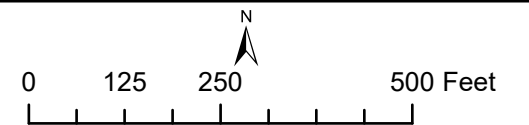
There are currently no Florida Forever Board of Trustees projects surrounding this park.

There is one parcel connected to Yellow Bluff that divides subdivisions and the park from JAX LNG, a natural gas supplier, and Interstate 295. A part of the Florida Master Site File, this parcel has the potential to:

- 1) Increase recreational opportunities by interpreting this area's history regarding its role in the Civil War.
 - 2) Preserve the historic landscape and any collected cultural resources.
 - 3) Restore the land and prevent future development in an already heavily industrialized area.
 - 4) Increase habitats that have been fragmented in the past.
 - 5) Provide more greenspace and the chance to interpret past activities along the St. Johns River.
- DRP will work with the Division of State Lands to acquire one 47.41-acre parcel.



YELLOW BLUFF FORT HISTORIC STATE PARK Optimum Boundary



Sources: ESRI; Florida Department of Environmental Protection
This graphical representation is provided for informational purposes and should not be considered authoritative for navigational, engineering, legal, and other uses.