

## Working with Traditionally Associated Groups: A Form of Civic Engagement

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THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ORGANIC ACT CREATES THE RESPONSIBILITY to conserve the natural and historic objects within parks “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Key is the phrase “future generations.” The United States is changing, and new approaches are needed for working with a non-English speaking public, neighbors, former residents of parks, and visitors unfamiliar with the idea of lands protected by and for everyone. The National Park Service’s (NPS’s) greatest center of support, the white middle class, has shrunk and the agency will have to understand new constituencies and change the attitudes of those employees who are unfamiliar with this new way of thinking. Ironically, this is a double-edged challenge. NPS finds itself dealing, on the one hand, with a highly diverse public. On the other, NPS has to highlight to the expanded public the many people in the United States who have important ties to park resources.

In order to preserve and protect parks for future generations, NPS has to enhance the public’s sense of ownership of the NPS mission. Thus, land often considered “pristine” renders associated cultural groups as invisible, not a part of the “moment in time” or the “wilderness” the park was mandated to protect or re-create. “Invisible” traditionally associated peoples remember the sites of their homes, although obvious physical traces of the communities have often been obliterated. For example, Prince William Forest Park (1948)<sup>1</sup> began as Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Area, created in 1936 under a Works Progress Administration (WPA) program. The recreational demonstration area displaced both African American and white families to accomplish three goals: (1) resettle families living on “unproductive or submarginal” farmland, (2) provide work projects for the Civilian Conservation Corps and WPA, (3) provide recreation areas for urban populations (Figures 1, 2). Left behind were 45 family cemeteries, challenging park managers to protect them and consider family legacies. Even though it was the state government that condemned the land and turned it over to NPS, community members often direct lingering hostility toward NPS. If the Park Service does not address residual or generational hostility, it alienates constituencies, and makes public input for planning difficult.<sup>2</sup> A possibility for a joint partnership comes from the eagerness of these groups to have easy access to the parks to tend community graves and to celebrate community reunions or religious rites on site.<sup>3</sup>

The NPS 2006 *Management Policies* ask parks to “embrace civic engagement as a fundamental discipline and practice.” It is “a commitment to building and sustaining relationships with neighbors and other communities of interest—both near and far.” Civic engagement goes further than “public involvement” since “it can be viewed as a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels that reinforces the commitment of the NPS and the public to the preservation of park resources. . . .”<sup>4</sup> This opportunity should be used

**Figure 1** Portrait of Charles and Mary Byrd, former residents of what is now Prince William Forest Park. Courtesy of Charlie Reid and Prince William Forest Park archives.



to create a dialogue that communicates “the relevance of NPS resources and programs to people, as well as ensures NPS responsiveness to diverse public viewpoints, values, and concerns.”<sup>55</sup> Civic engagement should instill ownership in the NPS mission, and guide NPS on “reasonable and effective means to involve the public in decisions at the park and program level.” Going further than public involvement, civic engagement is more easily integrated into resource management.

Civic engagement includes groups with special traditional ties to park units; these groups do not need to have relevance for park resources taught to them. Designated wilderness may be “untrammelled by humans,” retaining “primeval character,” and “without a noticeable imprint of humans’ work;”<sup>56</sup> nonetheless, there are no natural resources in a vacuum apart from human use. Careful scrutiny will allow NPS to discover cultural resources—architectural, archaeological, collections, National Register-nominated, and ethnographic—within the wilderness. Where cultures differ from those of mainstream NPS staff and visitors, the Park Service should “identify multiple points of view and potentially sensitive issues.”<sup>57</sup> Park enabling legislation for sites such as a battlefield, inaugural site, or commemorative site selects a significant moment in time, and thus “erases” the remaining history of park resources and their use. To address this omission, NPS *Management Policies* introduces the concept of *ethnographic resources*, with “ethnographic” referring to distinctive traditions handed down from one generation to the next within a community. Sensitive issues in identifying ethnographic resources include effective communication, potential impacts on park resources, and appropriate and accurate interpretation. Ethnographers are the professionals best able to advise, as they are cultural or applied anthropologists trained to apply their cross-cultural techniques pragmatically.

The term *traditionally associated peoples* (TAPs) defines a living group of people whose traditions are closely tied to the resources in national park units. This concept was meant to ensure that these groups are taken into consideration when park managers formulate policy, write plans, and make decisions. The term refers exclusively to groups who (1) form a community; (2) are tied to park resources through cultural identity and cultural heritage (i.e., ethnographic resources); (3) pass traditions and identity from generation to generation; and (4) were associated with significant resources before the creation of a park.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 2** The Miller farm, part of what is now Prince William Forest Park. Courtesy of Prince William Forest Park archives.

Legislation such as the Alaska Native Interest Lands Conservation Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act require that managers pay attention to Native Americans. Laws such as the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) more generally mandate public involvement and protection of national cultural heritage.<sup>9</sup> For compliance with NEPA and NHPA, outreach requires cross-cultural approaches to go beyond “minimum legal requirements for public involvement in our decisions and activities.”<sup>10</sup> For example, some traditionally associated ethnic groups do not respond to the *Federal Register*, newspaper notices, and flyers. To reach them requires personal invitation to leaders, phone calls, and use of media oriented toward and used by the group.

The relation of non-Native American TAPs to NPS is more than that of general stakeholders with an interest in recreation (e.g., climbers at Devils Tower National Monument), conservation of wilderness (Sierra Club), or historic preservation (National Trust for Historic Preservation). The non-Native American TAPs are a particular subset of the “public.” TAPs are here differentiated from large, generic interest groups like the millions of jazz-lovers tied to New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park or the millions of immigrants and their descendants associated with Ellis Island National Monument.

In addition to American Indians, Native Alaskans, and Native Hawaiians, there are a large variety of people traditionally associated with NPS units: Spanish Americans, African

Americans, Japanese Americans, Appalachians, non-federally recognized tribes, and a variety of long-term park neighbors. There are parks embedded in “alien” cultures outside the continental US, cultures with which expatriate NPS staff have to become familiar in order to function effectively: National Park of American Samoa (Samoans), War in the Pacific National Historical Park (Chamorros), San Juan National Historic Site (Puerto Ricans) and Virgin Islands National Park (Virgin Islanders).

TAPs differ from park visitors because certain park resources are closely linked to their sense of purpose, existence as a community, and development as distinct cultural and social entities. Clues to whether a group is a TAP come from pre-park uses of park lands, ethnic inholding communities, and historic uses of resources. For example, the resources may include birthplaces of significant individuals, religious sites, landscapes associated with a way of life, artifacts, plants or minerals necessary for culturally distinctive activities, and former workplaces of a localized occupation (loggers, miners, railroad workers, mill workers). A community is not necessarily land-based. It can include examples of dispersed groups such as Storer College alumni (Harpers Ferry National Historical Park); the Tuskegee Airmen (Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site); or Japanese internees who once lived at a particular camp (e.g., Manzanar National Historic Site). Some non-Native American TAPs are specifically mentioned in enabling legislation, entitling them to special consideration. For instance there is legislation for Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve (“culturally diverse groups associated with the lower Mississippi Delta”);<sup>11</sup> Kalaupapa National Historical Park (the community of Hansen’s Disease patients); Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site (Sweet Auburn neighborhood); and Jimmy Carter National Historic Site (“the history of a small rural southern town”).

### **The problem: Who cares?**

Many TAPs discussed here are not “privileged” legally. Enabling legislation does not recognize the ranchers associated with land incorporated into a park (Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument); Spanish Americans associated with land grants; or former residents of Mammoth Cave National Park. If not specifically mentioned in legislation, why give TAPs any special treatment? Why divert valuable time and resources? A dilemma is how a park can honor traditional long-term ties without overstepping NPS policy or breaking any laws.

There are legitimate reasons why park managers need to be proactive with these communities. They can avoid misunderstandings by positive, culturally sensitive engagement with TAPs. Managers can avoid the appearance of arbitrary and capricious behavior caused by ignoring justifiably significant groups. In regard to park decision-making and compliance with acts such as NEPA and NHPA, the Administrative Procedures Act<sup>12</sup> spells out a way to protect against lawsuits. Managers must be able to make a rational connection between the facts found and choices made. A decision in the situation under legal consideration must demonstrably follow the way a reasonable person reviewing the available facts would decide. The key is that NPS managers need “relevant and reasonably accessible facts” gathered by someone in advance of an urgent issue. To comply, managers need help collecting data on groups traditionally associated with parks. Thus they need to verify past history of use and the basis for the use of park resources, and to avoid misrepresenting facts and spreading misconceptions. Decisions need to include input from long-term neighbors and TAPs as pre-

sented to a professional cultural anthropologist who can delineate the cultural history of an area.

As a special subset of the public, non-Native American TAPs are part of park history. Some communities were pushed out when a park was created (leaving behind homes that are now archaeological sites, as well as “exotic” species of plants), or are associated with an on-going institution within a park. If not dispersed, non-Native American TAPs may be neighbors to the parks or inholders.<sup>13</sup> Their community history centers on areas where kin lived, prayed, studied, and worked, such as in the “hollers” of Blue Ridge Parkway, the logging camps of Redwood National Park, and the mines of New River Gorge National River and Keweenaw National Historical Park. Their sense of community, their music, and their folklore refer to places within the park. Within park boundaries are the churches where their grandparents or great-grandparents were baptized and married, and cemeteries where they were buried.

“Overlooked” TAPs may include farmers or fishermen whose interests were downplayed in order to preserve undeveloped coastlines or archaeological sites. They have willingly (by sale) or unwillingly (by condemnation) moved out of what are now park lands. These groups may have valuable information about threatened species or landscapes, nearby real estate development, or incursion of exotic plants or animals. TAPs may include workers or descendants of workers historically on site—highlighted already at Lowell National Historical Park but just beginning to be identified and documented, for example, at plantations such as Hampton National Historic Site. An objective of an ethnographic survey is to identify past and present residents and users of land, shore, water, and other resources within the park.

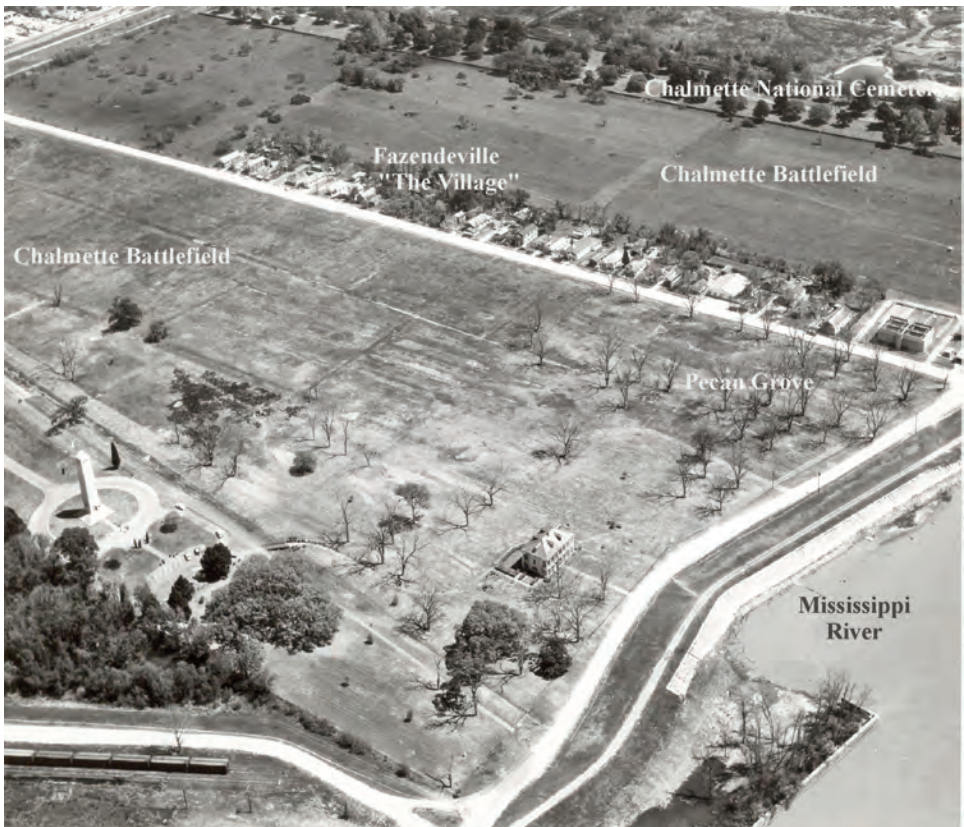
A beginning of a dialogue with TAPs is celebrating local heritage through interpretation of community history, music, and crafts, and by marking the location of the communities with site bulletins, waysides, or maps. For interpretation, Blue Ridge Parkway has musical demonstrations, Shenandoah National Park has an exhibit, and Catoctin Mountain Park has conducted oral histories. For preservation and for recruitment of staff and volunteers, however, the park must go further.

NPS has positive examples of accommodation with non-Native American TAPs’ ties to sacred sites in parks. Due to a special arrangement between the Catholic Church and NPS, Mission San Jose at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park holds mass, maintaining a tie to the local Hispanic population. By park practice, Pecos National Historical Park celebrates an annual mass at the ruins of its mission church, tied to the local Spanish American population. Congress acted in one case: the Cumberland Island Wilderness Boundary Adjustment Act (2004), which separated High Point/Half Moon Bluff Historic District from wilderness area of the national seashore, thereby preserving and facilitating access to historic buildings, including local African Americans’ First African Baptist Church.

Park managers need to look carefully at the makeup of their staff, both employees and volunteers, and attempt to recruit local people. Parks may find a lot less turnover if they recruit from the TAPs and build effective relationships in the process. Groups “invisible” to managers during planning for and after formation of the park may seek employment with NPS. On-going “invisibility” of their traditional ties creates poor employee morale. It would help if a manager asked, “Have NPS policies been explained to these members and other members of TAPs in terms easily reconcilable with traditionally associated perspectives?”

A special need for problem-solving occurs when pre-existing parks are consolidated or the park makes acquisitions. Chalmette National Historical Park, commemorating the 1815 Battle of New Orleans, was created in 1939 but the park only included a fraction of the original 1815 battlefield. A historic African American community, known as Fazendeville, established in 1867, was located on the “hallowed ground” of this significant battle (Figure 3). This residential community exemplified the early Reconstruction-period African American communities that sprang up after the Civil War. In the 1960s, local preservationists rallied Congress to save the battlefield, and NPS was directed to consolidate what remained of the battlefield between the Chalmette Monument and Chalmette National Cemetery into a single holding. Despite the community’s protests and best efforts, by 1966 the NPS had purchased Fazendeville, razed the homes, and relocated the residents to newly developing neighborhoods of the Lower Ninth Ward in adjacent New Orleans. All above-ground evidence of the historic community was removed except the road trace through the heart of old plantation fields. It was not until 1978, after Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve was legislated and Chalmette National Historical Park became a part of the newly designated park, that there was an awareness or concern for this group who maintained ties to the land.

**Figure 3** Aerial view of Fazendeville, Louisiana, and environs. Courtesy of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve archives.



At Piscataway Park in Maryland, the grave of Chief Turkey Tayac is unique in being a burial permitted in a park, though not the grave of a member of a federally recognized tribe. Piscataway Park then has to treat the Piscataway people as one of several TAPs that are without the protection of some of the laws that apply to federally recognized tribes.

Non-proactive managers may face problems such as the public outcry in New York City among local African Americans, which was generated by disregarding a historic African American burial ground that was uncovered beneath a building under construction by the General Services Administration. It took an expensive interruption of construction and the eventual creation of a park (African Burial Ground National Monument) to mitigate the situation, because review for Section 106 compliance had been cursory. In a similar situation, if a concerned TAP is identified ahead of time, construction or interpretive plans can be discussed with associated members before the NPS planners make final decisions.

The first step for park managers is to identify TAPs not already known: there are shy and “invisible” groups whose heritage is undiscovered by NPS and whose voices go unheard. Ethnographers have skills “to inform and enrich” NPS planning and programming for these groups, to foster stewardship of resources of concern, and to provide a “diversity of perspectives and stories.”<sup>14</sup> Ethnography is one of the six categories of cultural resources in NPS used to “ensure appropriate protection, preservation, treatment, and interpretation of cultural resources, employing the best current scholarship.”<sup>15</sup> Ethnographers are professionally trained to interact with, and document, cultures (e.g., TAPs) other than that of mainstream America.

Civic engagement calls for intercultural sensitivity. Accustomed to cultural diversity, an ethnographer can suggest respectful and appropriate behavior to better foster intercultural partnerships, both inside and outside NPS. Twenty years ago, cultural anthropologists were recruited to fill a role in regional offices. They have provided invaluable resources and consultation in a systematic way that managers can use to train park staff, protect resources, and develop programs with cultural sensitivity and awareness of TAPs.

Park superintendents who request it can fund ethnographic studies that provide important information to managers. Groups aspiring to be considered “traditionally associated people” need definition, and sometimes, in the case of historic ties, the descendants must be sought nearby. Ethnographic studies will help to distinguish those that are traditionally associated from other types of interest groups, especially larger, more generic groups who may also have legitimate reasons for lobbying for more attention from NPS managers and friends’ groups.<sup>16</sup>

Ethnographers can implement procedures and studies designed to identify TAPs and avoid related dilemmas. Unlike typical anthropological monographs, ethnographic studies are designed to be descriptive of TAPs in relation to the parks, and to discover their relationship to natural as well as cultural resources.<sup>17</sup> Ethnographic studies usually begin with an overview and assessment, and, if there is insufficient time and money, then they can use a set of rapid data-gathering tools. At the very least, an ethnographer can make an exploratory personal survey of a community and identify personal and institutional contacts for a park’s managers. When a park is preparing a general management plan, the managers may request an ethnographic study to identify TAPs and the associated resources. As a result of an overview and assessment, a need for more information may lead to a second study, such as an ethnohistory.

Look at some examples of useful findings. The ethnographic study of Louisiana's Cane River National Heritage Area alerted managers to disagreements among associated groups. Biscayne National Park's ethnographic overview and assessment indicated differing uses of the park by identified populations (Haitian migrants, Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans), and discovered that many visitors were not even aware of being in a national park.<sup>18</sup> An ethnohistorical study of eight villages near Cape Hatteras National Seashore looked at the impact of NPS on neighbors, and fleshed out park themes of coastal life and the fishing economy.<sup>19</sup> Traditional knowledge from Scandinavian fishermen, helpful to Isle Royale National Park, emerged from an ethnohistory conducted in and around the park.<sup>20</sup> Once managers at Capitol Reef National Park understood the meaning of orchards to the Mormon descendants of the planters, they affirmed the need to protect, not remove, the fruit trees.<sup>21</sup>

Armed with sufficient information, park managers may formulate specific park practices to recognize traditionally associated groups even if legislation does not. For instance, Lowell National Historical Park includes recent immigrant communities in its folk festival, and Blue Ridge Parkway salutes the Appalachian community by demonstrating its music and crafts. But, is this interpretation of folklore enough? Unfortunately, there are thornier problems, such as how to interpret Pearl Harbor simultaneously to Japanese visitors, Japanese American families of internees during World War II, and families of World War II veterans from US and Japan. Worrying about threats to resources, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site followed enabling legislation and included the residents of the surrounding neighborhood, Sweet Auburn, when planning for the large numbers of visitors expected for the Olympics.

Ethnographic work can be proactive, preparing managers before a TAP approaches the park with concerns. Ethnographers' studies can provide community contacts needed to communicate with TAPs when a crisis arises. The ethnographer will work as the superintendent's representative, making no promises without specific guidance. The ethnographers' role is to identify and document TAPs and facilitate a back-and-forth with park management. The ethnographer or a supervised contractor can delve into a group's perspectives, heritage, and knowledge of the National Park Service, which itself is a community with its own cultural language. If NPS has funding, a contracted ethnographer, following a scope of work carefully written by a cultural anthropologist, can identify and document TAPs. The best choice for a contractor is an applied or cultural anthropologist, someone who has not worked solely within academe, and preferably someone who is familiar with NPS and its requirements.

There are already established procedures to assist in communication about preservation of resources. To be most useful, such a conversation should be focused and chronicled, not unlike consultation with acknowledged Native American groups. When an administrative history includes practices (past and present) in regard to TAPs and associated resources, park precedents will permit consistent decisions. Past practices in one park may suggest solutions for others.

## **Conclusion**

Traditionally associated peoples (TAPs) can include others besides recognized Native Americans. NPS must use clearly-spelled-out criteria to define such non-Native American groups for park purposes in order to maintain equity and avoid public outcry. These criteria



are based on the relationship between cultural identity, community, and multi-generational ties and park resources. Civic engagement is a general means to create dialogue with groups falling both inside and outside the definition of TAPs.

Ethnographers can identify and document cultural heritage and groups with a cultural identity tied to particular park resources. With this identification, the park can conduct outreach and create partnerships. As a form of special civic engagement, NPS can use ethnographers to begin a dialogue with TAPs to identify significant resources or history and seek their input into NPS activities. Park managers can rectify the invisibility of TAPs or mitigate perceived or real injustices. Such work can be proactive, preparing managers when one of these cultural groups approaches the park with concerns. Ethnographers' local knowledge can be useful. When working with the groups, the ethnographers do not make promises; rather they delve into a group's perspectives, heritage, and their knowledge of NPS. The ethnographer can be the cultural translator between TAPs and park management during formulation of plans setting guidelines for a decade (e.g., long-range interpretive plans and general management plans).

To summarize, the benefits of knowing the associated people means better sensitivity to these groups and will help park managers in decision-making. Knowledge about TAPs can encourage the preservation ethic, minimize park disputes with neighbors, maximize community support and cooperation with other agencies, and avoid complaints.

## Endnotes

1. Arvilla Payne-Jackson and Sue Ann Taylor, *Prince William Forest Park: The African American Experience* (Triangle, Va.: NPS, June 2000). (Unpublished oral histories.)
2. Jesse Dukes, "Shenandoah Removal," radio segment, August 2008. Online at [www.library.appstate.edu/appcoll/research\\_aid/cknight.html](http://www.library.appstate.edu/appcoll/research_aid/cknight.html).
3. Not all resources associated with TAPs are necessarily land-based—for example, vistas, landscapes, and sounds. Nor are all ethnographic resources material objects. Hence NPS applies the terms "tangible" and "intangible."
4. National Park Service, *National Park Service Management Policies 2006* (Washington, D.C.: NPS), § 1.7.
5. National Park Service Director's Order no. 75A, *Civic Involvement and Public Involvement* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2007), § I; *National Park Service Management Policies 2006*, § 1.7, glossary.
6. *National Park Service Management Policies 2006*, § 6.2.1.1.
7. *National Park Service Management Policies 2006*, § 7.5.6.
8. *National Park Service Management Policies 2006*, § 5.35.3.
9. NHPA Section 106 requires consultation about the possible impacts on any National Register-eligible property potentially affected by a federally funded or licensed project. Those who have an interest in the property and are knowledgeable should be consulted as the agency assesses possible adverse impacts; in a case of adverse impact, affected parties should be consulted. Section 110 of NHPA requires federal agencies to identify and evaluate properties they control as to their possible eligibility for the National Register.
10. National Park Service Director's Order no. 75A, § 1.

11. The legislation only mentions Acadians so there was a runaway increase in “cultural centers” for other groups—German, Isleño, American Indian, and Italian—until a superintendent called a halt.
12. 5 USC, § 706.
13. Turning the idea of inholdings on its head, Keweenaw National Historical Park is composed of very small tracts of federal land set in a larger copper mining landscape.
14. National Park Service Director’s Order no. 75A, § II.
15. *National Park Service Management Policies 2006*, § 5.1.
16. Antoinette Jackson and Allan F. Burns’s *Ethnohistorical Study of Kingsley Plantation Community* (Atlanta: National Park Service, Southeast Region, 2006) explores an extended community of multiracial people looking at the history of a plantation, the community related to it, and its relation to the greater Jacksonville, Florida, area.
17. Karen Fog Olwig’s *Cultural Adaptation and Resistance on St. John* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985, 1993), for example, while containing data useful to park managers, including a section on the impact of the park on islanders (p. 162ff.), is not designed to be easily accessible to time-strapped park rangers or managers.
18. EDAW, Inc., *Final Report: Biscayne National Park Ethnographic Overview and Assessment* (Homestead, Fla.: Biscayne National Park, 2006).
19. Impact Assessment, Inc., *Final Technical Report, Volume One: Ethnohistorical Description of the Eight Villages Adjoining Cape Hatteras National Seashore and Interpretive Themes of History and Heritage* (Manteo, N.C.: Cape Hatteras National Seashore, 2005).
20. Rebecca Toupal, Richard W. Stoffle, and María Nieves Zedeño, *The Isle Royale Folke-fiskerisamfunn: Familier som levde av fiske. An Ethnohistory of the Scandinavian Folk Fishermen of Isle Royale National Park* (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, 2002).
21. David R.M. White, *By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them: An Ethnographic Evaluation of Orchard Resources at the Fruita Rural Historic District, Capitol Reef National Park, Utah* (Denver: National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 1994).

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