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Printed from ABQjournal.com, a service of the Albuquerque Journal

URL: <http://www.abqjournal.com/north/29235156701north12-29-09.htm>

Tuesday, December 29, 2009

## How Would Park Work?

**By Phil Parker***Journal Staff Writer*

With a Manhattan Project National Historical Park having taken its first steps toward becoming a reality, officials now must determine how the park could work within the Los Alamos community.

Heather McClenahan, assistant director of the Los Alamos Historical Society, called the development of the atomic bomb “the most significant event of the 20th century.” She said a park in Los Alamos dedicated to educating the public about the secret World War II effort to build the bomb would be “a great thing for the community and a great way to share this history.”

Logistics are a long way from being worked out, but earlier this month the National Park Service issued its recommendations born from an Interior Department study, initiated in 2004, “on the preservation and interpretation of historic sites of the Manhattan Project for potential inclusion into the National Park system.”

The study rejected a park that would have included resources at sites in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where uranium for the bomb was processed; Hanford, Wash., where plutonium was developed; and Dayton, Ohio, where parts of the bomb's triggers were made.

But the study found that using still-existing sites within Los Alamos's “landmark district” to create a new park, managed by the National Park Service, would be a feasible option.

There were other options suggested as well, such as designating all four sites as a national heritage area managed through public-private partnerships or as national historic sites affiliated with the national parks system.

But McClenahan believes the Manhattan Project park belongs in northern New Mexico.

“Los Alamos is where all the work happened and all the theory happened,” she

said. "It's the centerpiece."

She envisions something like the New Orleans Jazz Historical Park, which covers four acres and offers self-guided, audio-narrated walking tours.

"It would have a centralized visitors center, and then people would be sent to historical museums, like the Bradbury (Science Museum) and some other sites we're hoping the lab will restore and open to the public," she said.

Cindy Kelly, president of the Atomic Heritage Foundation, said Los Alamos National Lab's V Site, where scientists assembled explosives, would be one ideal educational destination. The V Site was built in 1944 and its building still stands because of a federal grant issued in 1999 to preserve the site.

LANL spokesperson Fred deSousa said the lab is also in the process of restoring the Gun Site, where Little Boy, which was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan, was assembled and tested during the Manhattan Project. Another key World War II laboratory area, the Quonset Hut, where explosive components of the Fat Man device were put together, is "on the list" to be renovated as well, deSousa said. Fat Man was dropped on Nagasaki.

"The lab's take is that we're working to preserve the history of the sites regardless of whether it becomes a national park site or not," deSousa said.

If the park becomes a reality, a serious issue will have to be addressed concerning access. V Site, Gun Site and the Quonset Hut are "behind the fence" in Los Alamos, meaning they are inside the lab's secured perimeter. While deSousa said there have been tours taken to those spots, they typically require a clearance for access.

DeSousa said the park service and Department of Energy would have to work out those issues, but this early it's difficult to say how that could be done.

Kelly also said Fuller Lodge, which served as a mess hall and guest quarters during the Manhattan Project, would be part of the park, along with "Bathtub Row," a collection of houses near Fuller Lodge where scientists lived during the Manhattan Project and which actually date back to the Los Alamos Ranch School, which predates World War II.

The park would also feature what Kelly called its "crown jewel": the Oppenheimer House, where J. Robert Oppenheimer lived with his family while he worked as

scientific director of the Manhattan Project.

The Oppenheimer House and other residences on Bathtub Row have already been preserved as part of the lab's National Historic Landmark District, which was established by the National Park Service in 1976.

A public meeting to discuss the park's potential will be held at Fuller Lodge on Feb. 2.

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## **Park comments**

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