

NEWS RELEASE

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FORT VANCOUVER National Trust

Name Changes Announced for the Vancouver National Historic Reserve (the historic site) and the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust (the nonprofit partner)

(May 5, 2009 –Vancouver, WASHINGTON) The Vancouver National Historic Reserve and the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust will assume new names reflecting the region’s historical identity. Over the next several months, the incorporated name of the historical site, Vancouver National Historic Reserve, will transition to the Fort Vancouver National Site. The nonprofit partner, the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust, will begin doing business as the Fort Vancouver National Trust.

In 1996 the Historic Reserve was established by an act of Congress, solidifying a partnership between the National Park Service, City of Vancouver, U.S. Army and Washington State. The Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust is the nonprofit partner for these entities. The formal Congressional designation does not translate to a readily useful identity, despite the partnership’s efforts to build awareness over the last decade.

The partners realized the name presented an ongoing challenge, but they didn’t realize the magnitude of the identity obstacle until a marketing grant enabled the partners to commission a scientific poll of households in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Clark counties. When respondents were asked to identify the National Park Service site closest to the Portland/Vancouver metro area, only one percent noted the Historic Reserve.

Next, respondents were told that the site includes Fort Vancouver, Officers Row and Pearson Air Museum and events including the 4th of July. Given this information, respondents were asked how they thought the site should be referenced. Not surprisingly, 64 percent preferred the name Fort Vancouver. The survey also included a fabricated name, Columbia River National Park, which was favored by 23 percent, while only 12 percent preferred the current identity, Vancouver National Historic Reserve. Accordingly, a remarkable 87 percent of respondents preferred an identity other than the site’s name of the past dozen years.

Both of the significant historical periods leading to the site’s development were associated with the identity “Fort Vancouver.” Fort Vancouver was the name given to the site after its founding in 1825 by the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the U.S. Army also adopted this identity for more than twenty-five years after establishing operations at the site in the mid-1800s.

Fort Vancouver is the historical name, the name still used by the National Park Service and the name by which the public knows the site. The Trust and its partners believe that in order

to accomplish the Trust's mission to achieve national recognition as a premiere historic site, they are best served by promoting the site's identity as "Fort Vancouver."

Trust President Elson Strahan noted, "Clearly, this will enhance our overall tourism development programs. Equally important, we hope residents in our four-county region will finally realize that Fort Vancouver includes their National Park assets, and is the nexus of our collective Northwest history."

To initiate the identity transition, the Trust's new Web site promoting visits to Fort Vancouver, Pearson Air Museum, Officers Row and more—will go live at www.fortvan.org this week.