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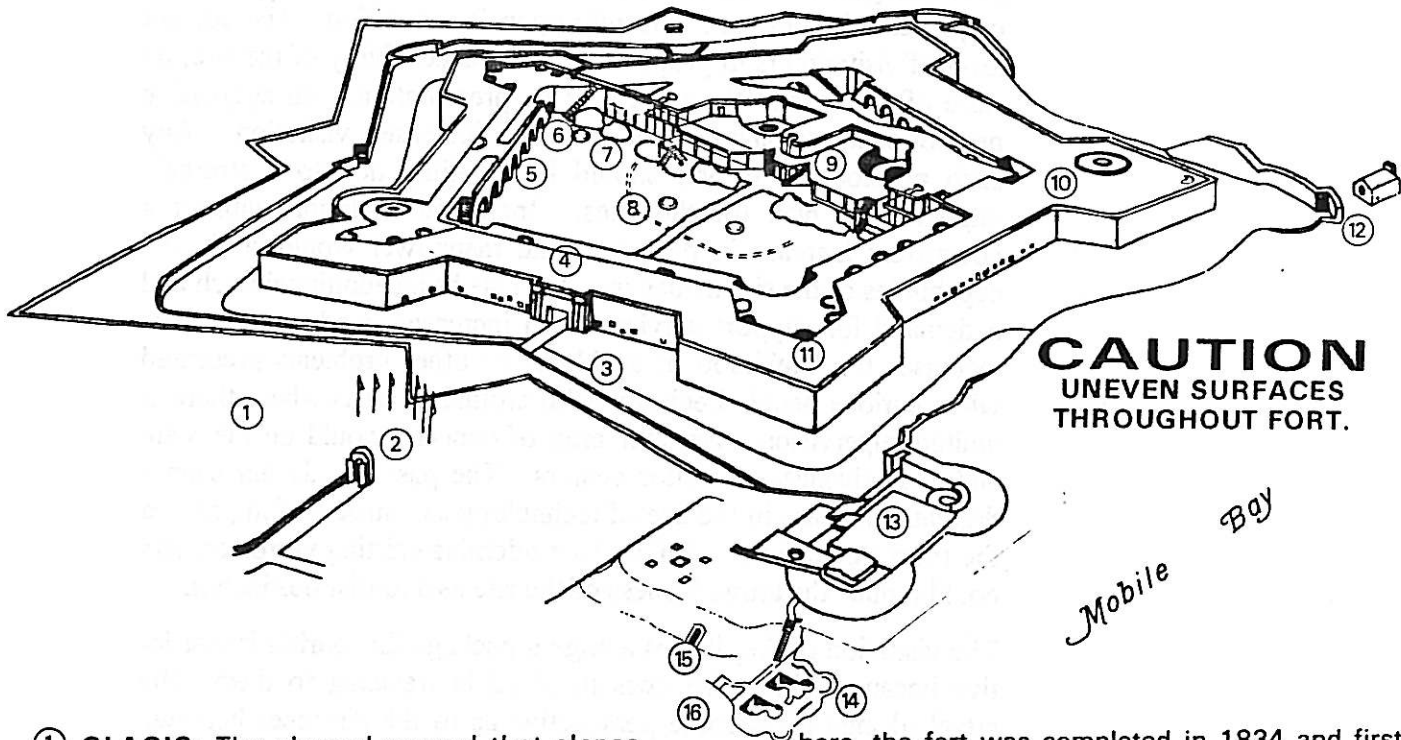
## Current Situation

The sites covered in this report do not constitute the entire series of historical sites involved in this campaign, thus this report should not be considered all inclusive. However, the sites which are covered--Fort Morgan, Fort Gaines, and Fort Blakeley are in various states of preservation and are currently open for visitation. The current level of visitation is in proportion to the accessibility of the site, its state of repair, and the quality of its presentation. An aggressive promotional campaign could result in increased visitation. Any such promotional efforts should be carefully tied to a strategic improvement plan for the sites. Increased visitation without a concurrent increase in resources and manpower would strain the capabilities of the site managers. Tourists bring additional trash and a demand for support services. An increased number of visitors increases the likelihood of accidents or other problems presented when curious people begin to poke around in areas where there is limited supervision. Another area of concern would be the state and attractiveness of visitor centers. The past decade has seen a dramatic increase in the use of technology as a means of improving the tourist experience. Failure to modernize existing visitor centers could reduce the attractiveness of the site as a tourist destination.

The visitation of the sites as a cogent package for tourists is restrictive because of the distances involved in traveling to them. The attached map gives some perspective as to the distances between the sites. The amount of visitation time each site commands requires a thoughtful analysis of the manner in which tourists would be able to reach and walk through them. The Forts Morgan and Gaines require at least one half day each and are governed by the ferry schedule. A crossing takes about one hour and often involves a lengthy wait depending on the number of ferries operating. A visitor who is staying in Mobile will require at least one hour if not one and one half hours to arrive at a site. Visiting Fort Blakeley could take an entire day and certainly no less than one half a day. Transportation time from Forts Morgan and Gaines to Fort Blakeley are lengthy: over 1 hour from Fort Morgan and over two hours from Fort Gaines (including a trip through the city of Mobile).

Regional visitation must consider the attractive Civil War sites in Pensacola, Florida, Gulf Shores National Seashore, the Mobile Museum, Fort Massachusetts (Ship Island, Mississippi) and Beauvoir (Jefferson Davis's retirement home). All could be placed

# Layout of Fort Morgan



① **GLACIS:** The cleared ground that slopes upward toward the fort. It screened the fort walls from enemy gunfire. The seven flags on the glacis represent the groups that have controlled this area. They are: France, Great Britain, Spain, the United States, the Alabama Militia (Montgomery Rifles), the Confederacy, and the State of Alabama.

② **POSTERN:** The connecting tunnel through the glacis. The tunnel originally had a sand floor. The concrete was added during the 20th century.

③ **DITCH:** Also known as the dry moat, the ditch surrounds the fort. It was intended to prevent an enemy from easily reaching the walls of the fort. The ditch could be swept with a deadly cross-fire from guns mounted in the fort's bastions. The brick-lined drain in the center of the ditch carries rainwater out of the moat.

④ **SALLYPORT:** The main entrance of the fort. The date "1833" is the year the fort was named, not the year it was completed. Named for General Daniel Morgan, a Revolutionary War

hero, the fort was completed in 1834 and first occupied in March of that year.

⑤ **CASEMATES:** These arched rooms were designed as protected gun positions for the fort's cannon, but few cannon were ever mounted in them. The casemates were used for the storage of food and equipment and were occasionally used as living quarters for troops, providing shelter from enemy bombardment.

⑥ **POWDER MAGAZINE:** Large amounts of black powder were needed to fire the fort's cannons. The powder was stored in small, well protected, rooms known as magazines. The fort was designed with two magazines, and a third was added in the 1870s. At the time of the siege of the fort in 1864 more than 60,000 pounds of powder was stored in the magazines. The small openings in the walls provided ventilation for the rooms.

⑦ **CISTERN:** There are four in-ground brick cisterns in the fort. They were used to store rainwater for the use of the men in the garrison.

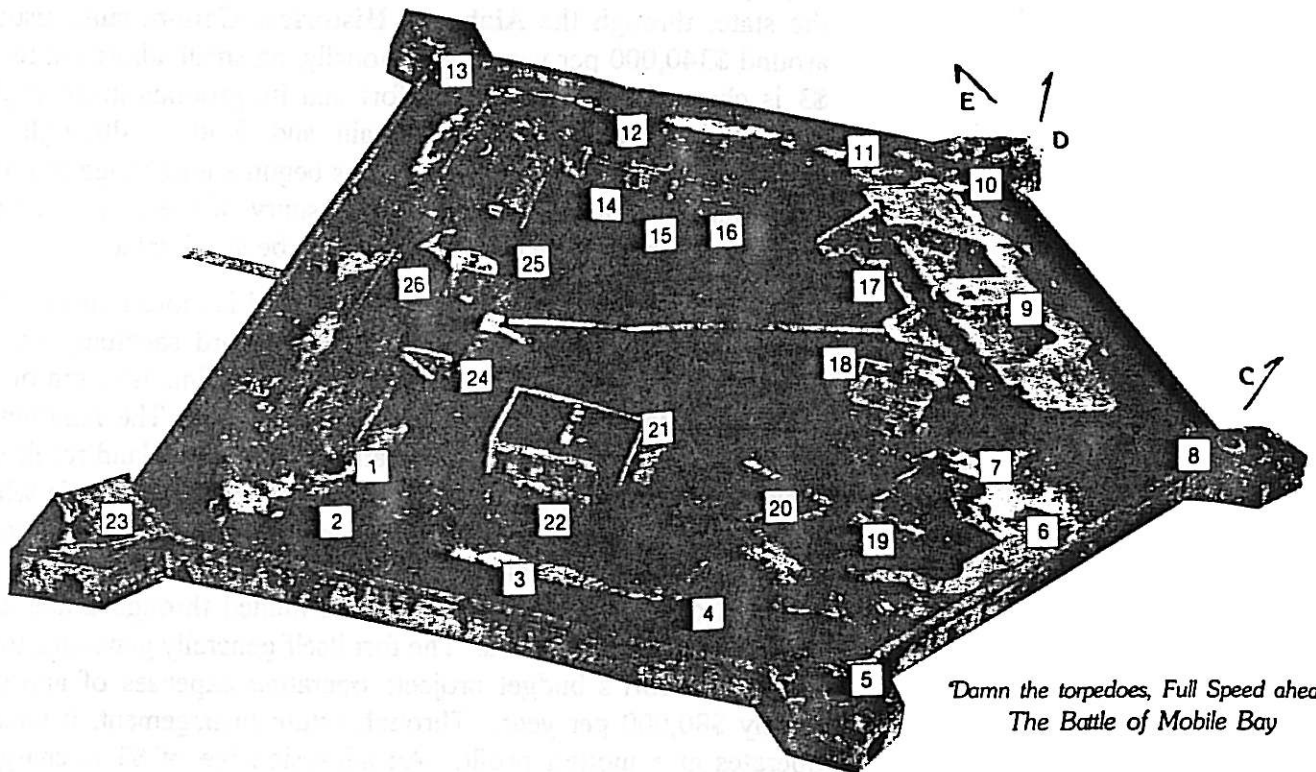
on a transportation grid which would make sense from a promotional and practical sense.

**Fort Morgan**, a 477 acre state park, is the most visited site with nearly 100,000 annual visitors. The site consists of the fort, other historical buildings and a visitors center. It is located at the end of a peninsula and is within 20 miles of the beach resorts of Gulf Shores, and Orange Beach. A small yet effective team of state employees mans this clean, well kept site. Operations are funded by the state, through the **Alabama Historical Commission**, usually around \$340,000 per year. Additionally, an small admission fee of \$3 is charged. The size of the fort and its grounds make capital improvements both hard to sustain and fund. Although the **Alabama Historical Commission** has begun a long range program for stabilization and repointing the masonry of the fort a cursory inspection suggests the timetable needs to be accelerated. .

Fort Gaines is smaller than Fort Morgan and is more remote. It is located within a 188.5 acre state park and bird sanctuary on the eastern tip of Dauphin Island. It is under the administration of the **Dauphin Island Beach and Recreation Board**. The remoteness of the site and the relative lack of amenities on the island result in a lower level of visitation. This is consistent with the lifestyle which the local residents enjoy. In 1996, approximately 45,000 people visited the site. Fort Gaines does not receive state funding, but, has received occasional grants. The fort is funded through a line item from the local beach board. The fort itself generally generates these funds. The fort's budget projects operating expenses of approximately \$80,000 per year. Through astute management, it usually operates at a modest profit. An admission fee of \$3 is charged. Limited funding means the staffing is smaller, only two full time individuals. There are no employee benefits and volunteers and part-time employees do the bulk of seasonal work. The site is professionally managed and very well kept. However, cumulative damage from hurricanes has reduced portions of the fort to standing ruins. The greatest danger to Fort Gaines appears to be in the extensive erosion of mortar. Several recent hurricanes have dropped prodigious amounts of water into the fort. **Hurricane Danny** (July 1997) stalled over Mobile Bay exposing the fort to a lengthy and destructive wind blasting that drove moisture into the walls. This left extensive portions of the fort's brickwork in need of urgent attention to prevent sections of the fort from collapsing.

The 3,800 acre Alabama state park at Fort Blakeley is one of the last remnants of the Battle for Mobile. Fort Blakeley was reclaimed almost single handedly by Ms. Mary Grice. It is managed by a special organization, the **Historic Blakeley Authority**,

# Layout of Fort Gaines



*"Damn the torpedoes, Full Speed ahead!"  
The Battle of Mobile Bay*

established by the state of Alabama. The site is underutilized with an annual visitation of just 10,000-15,000 people. The site does receive state funding for operations, but, there is little additional money available for construction of visitor amenities or archeological work. The totality of the state site is some 2,200 acres, most of which was donated. The remaining 1,600 acres of the National Register site are in private hands. That 1,600 acres house about 200 residents.

The low visitation would appear to be directly correlated to the lack of investment, marketing and interpretation that is required to make the site viable as a tourist attraction. There is limited manpower available with rangers often being pressed into duty as campground attendants. Much of the work maintaining the site is done by volunteers and Civil War reenactors who have access to the site for living history and battle reenactments.

An area of concern is the practice of making the core area of the battlefield available for living history events. Some earthworks have been disturbed and, no doubt, archeological resources removed by relic hunters. Fortunately, the vast majority of the site, with its extensive earthworks--nearly 5 1/2 miles worth, remains untouched. There is an urgency to develop a resource protection and site utilization plan to help the park begin to realize its potential.

It is possible for these sites to continue operating as they are without any action being taken, but for how long? This report will focus on issues with specific recommendations. If these are handled now there is less likelihood of an urgent and more expensive crisis later.

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## Preservation Efforts

### Land Acquisition

Both the sites of Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines are completely enclosed within publicly owned parks. The only land acquisition issues involve Fort Blakeley. Although 2,200 acres of this site are contained within the state park, 65 privately held acres contain significant entrenchments and are contiguous to the park. This acreage has been the source of controversy and concern during the past five years.

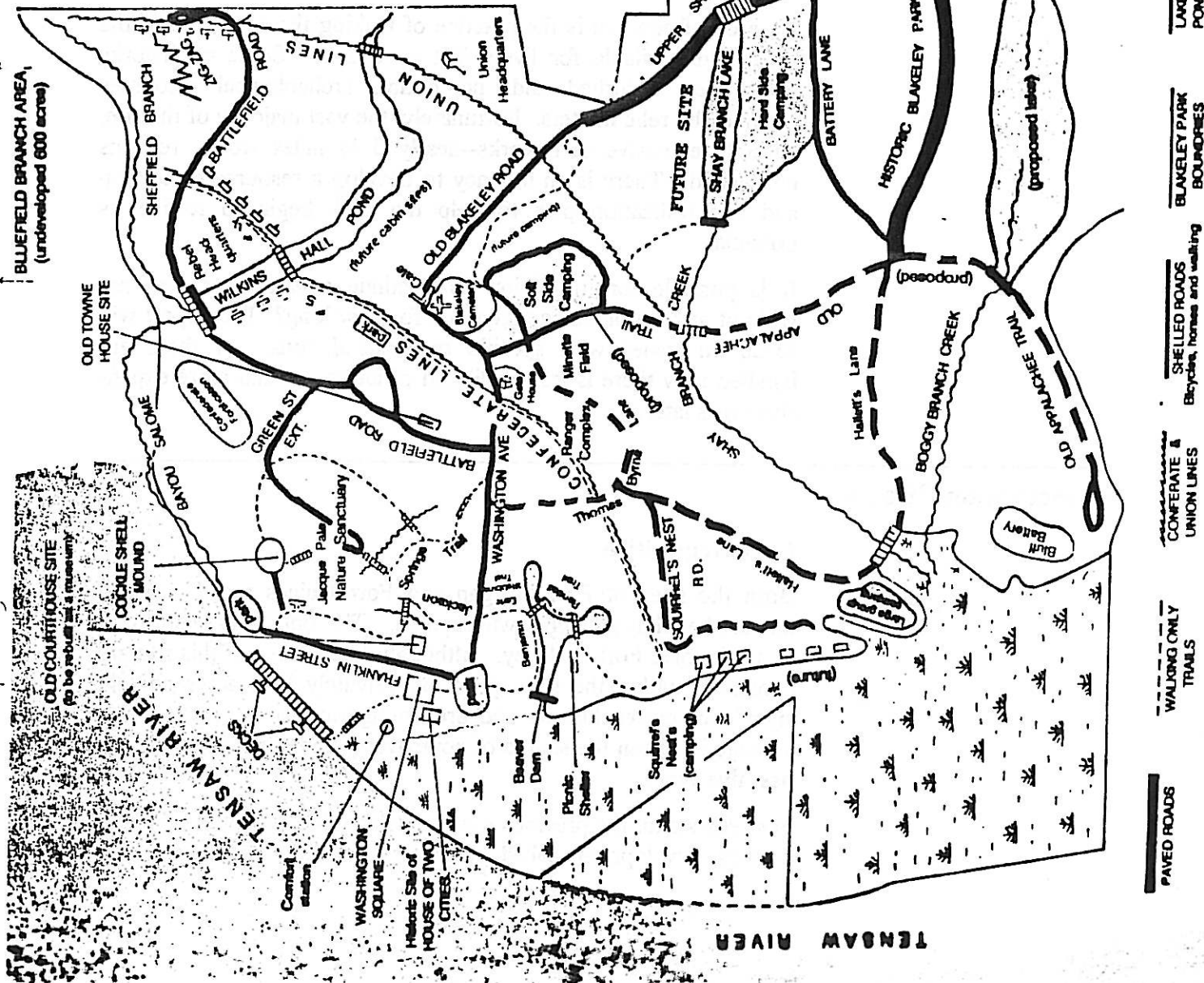
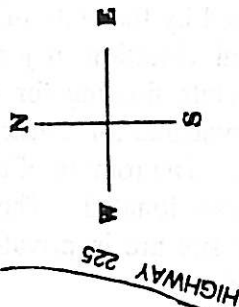
Five years ago, the previous owner declared his intention to build a housing development called *Confederate Acres*. The land would



# HISTORIC BLAKELEY STATE PARK

This park encompasses the largest NATIONAL REGISTER SITE east of the Mississippi River (3,800 acres). Once home to a pre-historic Indian civilization (it abounds with mounds), to an early French and Appalachian Indian Settlement (circa 1704-65), to a Federal style seaport town created as a direct result of the Second War of Independence (1812), and finally to the LAST MAJOR battle of the WAR BETWEEN THE STATES.

33707 State Highway 225  
Spanish Fort, AL 36527  
Phone 205/628-0798  
Mary Grice, Director



- 5 1/2 miles of unspoiled Civil War fortifications.
- PARK NATURE PATHS into unsurpassed and unusually beautiful pristine areas. An environmental paradise!
- A quarter mile of waterfront boardwalk with 2 observation decks on Tensaw River.
- 10 1/2 miles of riding & bicycling trails
- 16 primitive camp sites.
- 3 major family picnic areas.
- A large octagonal pavilion
- 1st of a series of "Squirrel Nests" (hard surface, shelter camping)
- 3 fishing ponds
- Future hard side camping area (motor homes, etc.)

map by Gray Crawford

have been divided into 43 residential lots. Some of these would have destroyed the scenic view shed behind the 15th Massachusetts Battery and encroached upon the land defended by the 2nd Connecticut Battery. However, the project died. Recently the property was acquired by another individual who seems less inclined to capitalize on the possible opportunity to develop the site.

The **Historic Blakeley Authority** has been in contact with national land preservation and acquisition groups in hopes of finding financial support for the acquisition of the entire 65 acres. Upon examination only 27 acres are important to the Civil War site. The area that compromises the view shed and has trench works upon it is all that is at issue.

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## **Education and Interpretation**

### **Site Interpretive Efforts**

A major deficiency at the sites is the lack of interpretation. Each of the forts has a self-guided walking tour which directs people to the key sites, but none are exemplary.

The visitor's experience should include the ability to walk the sites with some visual assistance. Tours of most of our national military sites include interpretive signage, military artifacts, and appropriate landscaping for the scene. A Visitor's Center or museum sets up the field work and is a major component of a quality experience.

The tourist's ability to find Mobile Campaign routes of march and the battlefields are severely limited by the absence of directional and informational signage on major highways.

### **Publications**

The site brochures that are available to support Forts Morgan and Gaines are inadequate for a meaningful interpretation of the sites or as stand alone educational documents. Plans are underway to revise them, but, they are being held up due to a lack of funds.

There are no interpretive materials for Fort Blakeley, nor are there funds for their development.

There are no campaign guides to place the various sites in relationship to each other or the overall war.





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## The Orange Beach Conference

### Overview.

The Mobile Campaign Interpretation and Preservation Conference was held in Orange Beach, Alabama to facilitate easy access to Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines. A site survey was conducted in March 1997 and was followed up by various telephone calls to identify key individuals and organizations which needed to be invited. Every invitation which was suggested was extended. The list of attendees on attachment #2 reflects a group of people who have the desire and resources to make considerable progress on the issues raised in this report.

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## Conference Issues

BGES analyzed the issues presented by the various sites managers and synthesized them with background information. The issues and their corresponding recommendations are presented below.

### ***Issue #1. Development of a Cogent Regional Strategy for Presentation of the Mobile Campaign.***

Most of the primary sites relating to the 1864 and 1865 Mobile Campaign are open to the public as stand alone attractions. They go as far west as Ship Island, off the coast of Mississippi, and as far east as Pensacola, Florida. Individually, they are attractive tourist destinations. Collectively, they tell the story of the final major campaign of the Civil War.

Heritage tourism is a growing enterprise that can attract large numbers of visitors and thus generate additional revenue for participating communities. The ability to capture a larger share of the Civil War market is dependent upon an understanding of what makes a destination attractive. The best way to analyze such an opportunity is to see what works elsewhere. In states such as Virginia and Mississippi, where a large portion of the heritage resources are Civil War related, an aggressive and far reaching plan exists to capture the heritage tourist dollar. Investments are frequently made to improve the attractiveness of the site.

There are proven actions which have worked, but, most are dependent upon independent jurisdictions being willing to work together. The Mobile Campaign crossed many geographical



boundaries. Cities, counties, states, and the Federal Government all have ownership or responsibility for one or more of the critical sites in this campaign. An active, results oriented working group composed of individuals from these groups is essential to ensure a complete and holistic preservation plan for the Civil War sites in the Gulf Coast region. They should develop a plan that capitalizes upon the existing resources while mapping out a direction to enhance the experience for future generations.

Success is assured whenever the service provider understands their attraction through the eyes of a visitor. This requires the region to approach the attraction with an open mind as to enhancements which might be required. A cursory survey reveals much to be done.

The campaign is not recognized, interpreted, or promoted by the states or local tourist agencies. In short, this means that a visitor to the region must depend upon externally generated tourist packages or self study to find their way around. Professional quality walking tour brochures, signage, landscaping and upgraded visitors's centers are all needed at these sites and around the region to make the tourist's experience a full one. Specifically, there is a lack of information on the role of African-Americans and their role in the Civil War. Finally, a cogent set of campaign signage and directional markers tying the key sites together is critically needed.

***Recommendation #1. A regional steering committee should be formed to develop a unified action plan for presentation of the campaign. The Mobile Museum would be a good candidate to be the executive agency for such a group.***

***Recommendation #2. A sub-working group should be formed to ensure regional projects are effectively planned and coordinated between partner agencies.***

***Recommendation #3. Local Convention and Visitors bureaus(CVBs) should coordinate with the state tourism director to develop a promotional strategy and budget to feature these sites as a campaign.***

***Recommendation #4. The region should petition the state Department of Transportation for a standard***



*campaign trail marker along the primary routes of the trail.*

**Recommendation #5.** *A full color campaign guide should be designed, printed, and distributed. It should feature all the significant sites relating to the campaign, lines of march, and key personalities. It would provide a chronological sequence to assist in a study of the campaign.*

**Recommendation #6.** *An interpretive plan for the entire campaign should incorporate signage at and between the sites to give the visitor a clear and unambiguous explanation of their interrelationship.*

**Recommendation #7.** *Individual sites should develop a docent program.*

**Recommendation #8.** *State transportation officials should be petitioned to examine and prepare the docks at Forts Morgan and Gaines for tour bus traffic.*

**Recommendation #9.** *Local CVBs should make local and national tour companies aware of the potential tour concession supporting this overall initiative.*

**Recommendation #10.** *CVBs should examine the possibility of water based tours from Dauphin Island and/or Fort Morgan.*

**Recommendation #11.** *Forts Morgan and Gaines should plan interpretive kiosks at their ferry landings. One which tells the story of the engagement between Admiral Buchanan's C.S.S. Tennessee and Farragut's fleet and the other which would overview the entire campaign.*

**Recommendation #12.** *Site brochures for Forts Morgan and Gaines should be redone to increase their educational value for the tourist.*

**Recommendation #13.** *A walking tour documenting siege operations against Fort Morgan and the land*



