



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
INTERMOUNTAIN REGION
12795 West Alameda Parkway
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287



IN REPLY REFER TO:
H34 (IMDE-HPP)

MAR 1 2 2012

Mr. Neil Thomas
Project Manager
Battleship Texas Dry Berth Project
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Thank you for inviting the National Park Service (NPS) to attend the public meeting on February 28, 2012 regarding the Battleship Texas Dry Berth project. Although we were not able to attend the meeting, we appreciate that you provided Tom Keohan of my staff with information about the project in a phone call on February 27. The dry berthing of the USS *Texas*, which was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1976, is an extremely important project and we are very thankful to the voters of Texas and the Texas State Legislature for approving \$25 million in funding for this effort, as well as to Battleship Texas Foundation, which provided an additional \$4 million. We also want to thank Texas Parks and Wildlife for preparing the engineering, design and alternative studies for this project, which are focused on helping to preserve this nationally significant resource.

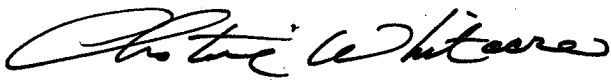
It is our understanding that Texas Parks & Wildlife is working with the U.S. Navy regarding this project, and that the Navy is the lead federal agency involved in this undertaking. Section 110(f) of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that "prior to the approval of any Federal undertaking, which may directly and adversely affect any National Historic Landmark, the head of the responsible Federal agency shall, to the maximum extent possible, undertake such planning and actions as may be necessary to minimize harm to such landmark, and shall afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking." Moreover, as stated in 36 CFR Part 800.10(c), federal agencies are required to notify the Secretary of the Interior (delegated to the National Park Service) of any consultation involving an undertaking at an NHL and invite the Secretary to participate in the consultation where there may be an adverse effect. Apparently no determination of effect has yet been made regarding the dry berthing project. However, based on the information that you provided, it appears that an adverse effect is possible.

As you are no doubt aware, the proposed undertaking is a complex project because it involves two NHLs: the USS *Texas* and the San Jacinto Battlefield, which is adjacent to the battleship and may be adversely affected by ground-disturbing activities associated with the dry berthing. The five options for dry berthing the USS *Texas* at its current location, as presented in the materials on the project website, appear reasonable approaches, particularly considering that moving the ship is likely to cause irreparable damage to this one-of-a-kind resource.

Based on our preliminary review of the materials on the website, as well as discussions between you and Tom Keohan, it appears that the option to keep the battleship in its current location but cradled in sand – variously referred to as Option 5 or the “sandbox” option – may have the least potential to adversely affect either the battleship or the San Jacinto Battlefield. We would like to remain apprised, however, of further study conducted related to this option, including any analysis on the potential to affect underwater archeology at the current location. We also request additional information on any plans to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on archeological resources resulting from the project’s ground-disturbing activities that may affect the San Jacinto Battlefield NHL, as well as any consideration of the potential for adverse visual effects on the battlefield landscape.

We look forward to further consultation with your office and with the Navy as these plans are refined and details developed. Please feel free to contact me at (303) 969-2882 and christine_whitacre@nps.gov, and/or or Tom Keohan at (303) 969-2897 and tom_keohan@nps.gov.

Sincerely,



Christine Whitacre
Program Manager
Heritage Partnerships Program

cc:

Mark Wolfe, Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711

Katharine Kerr, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, The Old Post Office Building, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Ste. 809, Washington DC 20001

William R. Manley, Acting Deputy Federal Preservation Officer, Department of Navy, 1322 Patterson Ave, SE, Washington, DC 20374-5065

Captain Christopher Pietras, Department of Navy, Naval Sea Systems Command, 1333 Isaac Hull Ave. S.E., Washington, DC 20376

Russ Whitlock, NPS State of Texas Coordinator, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, P.O. Box 329, Johnson City, TX 78636-0329.