

Fort Stark

New Castle Selectboard Meeting

March 6, 2023 – 11:00 am



Battery Hunter at Fort Stark, New Castle NH

Fort Stark was constructed between 1901 and 1905 as an addition to the larger complex protecting Portsmouth Harbor. There is a rich history at this site, however ongoing safety concerns and vandalism have detrimentally affected the educational opportunities and safe public access currently available. The area most affected by vandalism and inappropriate behavior at Fort Stark is Battery David Hunter.

Battery David Hunter, the largest battery at Fort Stark State Historic Site, is the subject of the proposed project. This plan aims to address safety concerns and mitigate the inappropriate behavior exhibited on the grounds through the following efforts:

- Adding steel plates to the windows and doors to prevent public access inside hallways with low visibility.
- Removing graffiti on the exterior of all batteries.
- Increasing parking access by formalizing parking spaces and paving the lot.
- Installing a new septic system with infrastructure to tie into museum for the addition of bathrooms in the future.

Fort Stark began as a base of military operations and as such was not constructed with public access in mind. Battery Hunter exemplifies this through the many dark corners and winding hallways which have frequently been damaged by vandalism such as graffiti and littering. Overall, the damage at this site has increased to detrimental levels, and the proposed project aims to put an end to this behavior through the addition of steel plates on the doors and windows of Battery Hunter. These safety measures will prevent the public from accessing these dangerous areas and will promote preservation at the site for future generations. Further, to improve the public use of Fort Stark overall, the proposed project includes an improvement in parking facilities and installation of a septic system. This septic system is designed to support the future installation of permanent restrooms in the visitor center.

The project is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Phase I of the project will begin with securing the bunkers in May/June of 2023. Phase II construction, parking lot and septic system, will begin in the fall of 2023 and be completed by Spring of 2024. The Division will work with the contractor to keep the site opened to the public during battery work and will wait to upgrade the parking area until the end of the season. These updates will allow for more visitors to enjoy Fort Stark, and the septic system upgrades will further support the rise in visitors.