



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Shenandoah National Park  
3655 US Hwy. 211 East  
Luray, Virginia 22835-9036

IN REPLY REFER TO:

PARK DIRECTIVE NO. NCR - 406

Subject: Cemetery Maintenance and Use

All cemeteries within Shenandoah National Park (SNP) existed prior to the establishment of Skyline Drive or the Park. Most were family burial places, although several were affiliated with community churches or organizations. Many have had burials within the past three decades and several are still in active use.

Legal case law and policy first instituted by the Director in 1931 established that descendants of individuals buried in the cemeteries within Park boundaries either have legal interest in the cemeteries or have specific rights to access and use. This directive is based on the recognition of that family interest.

### **MAINTENANCE**

All cemeteries may be maintained by the families of those buried in the cemetery or by volunteers with the specific written approval of family members.

A key to fire roads providing access to cemeteries behind locked gates may be picked up and signed for at the entrance stations by family members wishing to deliver maintenance supplies and/or equipment to cemeteries. In specific instances where a recognized family organization or family cemetery manager exists, a key may be issued to the designee of that organization or to that manager.

No vegetation clearance will be allowed beyond the defined and established boundaries of the cemetery. Vegetation removed from the cemetery during maintenance operations may be scattered in the areas surrounding the cemetery and shall not be left in obvious piles.

Mechanized equipment (mowers, chainsaws, weed eaters, etc...) may be used to maintain cemeteries NOT in Congressionally designated Wilderness. No herbicides or pesticides may be used in cemetery

maintenance without written review and approval from the Natural & Cultural Resources, Integrated Pest Management Specialist.

The Park may not, by law, furnish staff, equipment, or supplies for maintaining Park cemeteries for which families retain an interest. The Park will be willing to work with recognized family organizations to establish a cooperative agreement to mutually assist in specific cemetery preservation.

The Park will maintain the roads accessing the cemeteries provided the roads are on the current road list. The roads will only be maintained to current road standards and may not be suitable for automobile use. Families are allowed to maintain right-of-way access to family cemeteries, but such work must be approved in writing by the Natural & Cultural Resources, Landscape Architect.

Maintenance of existing cemetery fencing/gates is the responsibility of the family. New fencing and/or gates must be approved in writing, in advance, by the Landscape Architect (NCR).

If cemeteries are not maintained by families or volunteers, natural vegetative succession will reclaim the sites. No Park Service action will be taken to slow or abate this process.

#### **ACTIVE CEMETERY USE**

The dimensions of all cemeteries have been established and, in most cases, corners have been marked. No burials may extend beyond these boundaries.

Only descendants of family members buried in cemeteries, or those approved by family associations, may be buried in cemeteries within the Park boundary. Once all grave sites within the designated boundary are filled, burials will cease.

The Landscape Architect for the Natural & Cultural Division must be informed of all proposed burials to assure that entrance stations are aware of the pending burial and to assure smooth coordination of the event. Funeral Homes should notify the SNP Communications Center (540)999-3422 prior to entering the park for grave preparation. A backhoe may be used by the funeral home to open the grave provided the cemetery is not in a Congressionally designated wilderness area and provided the backhoe has access to the site without damage to park resources.

No new cemeteries may be developed.

Inactive cemeteries may be activated by family members as long as the above standards are met.

All laws and policies of the Commonwealth of Virginia pertaining to burials and cemetery use are applicable to Park cemeteries.

Entrance fees will be waived for those persons maintaining cemeteries, family members visiting family cemeteries, or those attending funerals. Those for whom fees are waived will be asked to sign the cemetery visitor sheet at the entrance station.

#### **PATROL AND INVESTIGATION OF CRIMES**

Cemeteries located within the existing boundaries of the Park are patrolled and regulations enforced consistent with enforcement activities throughout the Park by Park protection rangers. Violations of park regulations (such as vandalism, tampering, disorderly conduct, etc..) observed by visiting family members should be reported to the SNP Communications Center (540) 999-3422 to ensure that a report is taken and an investigation conducted.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO FAMILY MEMBERS**

Recognizing the historic and cultural importance of the cemeteries within the Park boundaries, the National Park Service (NPS) makes the following recommendations to families so that the long-term integrity of the cemeteries may be preserved:

New monuments should be in keeping with the style, size, color, and texture of the historic cemetery stone. Modern stones of greatly different color and/or style tend to disrupt the design and feeling of the burial ground.

It is recommended that individual grave sites not be enclosed by low fencing or hedges. Such enclosures are not traditional and, again, disrupt the landscape of the grounds.

Flowers placed on the graves should be artificial. Trees, shrubs, and flowers planted in the cemetery should be native and/or non-invasive so they do not spread from the cemetery onto adjacent park lands. The Park Natural Resource Specialists or headquarters personnel will be happy to work with family members on plant selections or recommendations.

The park Cultural Resource Specialist will be willing to work with established family associations to develop standards for cemetery maintenance and plot markings. However, specific issues dealing with maintenance, monument and plot marking, and grave locations remain the responsibility of each cemetery's family association and will not be enforced by park staff.

Approved:

Douglas K. Morris /s/

2/11/00

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Douglas K. Morris  
Superintendent

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Date

