Media coverage

**PROPERTY TRANSFER**

<http://hamptonroads.com/2013/05/state-likely-get-312-acres-fort-monroe>

**State likely to get 312 acres at Fort Monroe**

By [Sarah Kleiner Varble](http://hamptonroads.com/svarble)  
The Virginian-Pilot  
© May 24, 2013

More than 300 acres of the 565-acre site around Fort Monroe in Hampton likely will transfer to the commonwealth from the Army by the end of the month.

The Fort Monroe Authority voted Thursday to recommend Gov. Bob McDonnell accept the transfer of 312 acres by May 28, according to a news release. A few small parcels would transfer after the Army finishes environmental cleanup.

But the Army wants to keep a large portion of the property, including a marina and a segment just north of the moat-surrounded fort.

The state authority has maintained that all of the land should revert to Virginia. While negotiations on the return of the rest of the site continue, the state and the federal government will jointly be responsible for maintenance, security and utilities.

Land on the north end of the site that was designated a national monument by President Barack Obama will transfer from the authority to the National Park Service once the authority has taken control of the entire site.

"The public is not going to perceive anything different at Fort Monroe," Glenn Oder, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority, said in a statement. "We are still leasing houses, leasing commercial space; the Casemate Museum is still open, and the beaches are available to enjoy."

Consultants are working on a master plan that will guide future development on the property. The plan is expected to be complete by the summer.

Fort Monroe ceased to operate as an Army installation in 2011.

Sarah Kleiner Varble, 757-446-2318, sarah.varble@pilotonline.com

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-likely-to-take-control-of-300-acres-at-fort-monroe-by-end-of-may/2013/05/24/c9d469d6-c46e-11e2-9642-a56177f1cdf7_story.html>

Virginia likely to take control of 300 acres at Fort Monroe by end of May

### By Associated Press,

### Associated Press

**May 24, 2013 12:38 PM EDT**

### AP

### Published: May 24

HAMPTON, Va. — Virginia is likely to take control of 300 acres of the 565-acre site around Fort Monroe by the end of the month.

Media outlets report that the Fort Monroe Authority voted Thursday to recommend Gov. Bob McDonnell accept the transfer of 312 acres by May 28.

The state had wanted all the land to revert to Virginia, but the Army wants to keep a large portion that includes a marina and other property.

Some land at the site was designated a national monument by President Barack Obama and will be transferred to the National Park Service for that purpose.

Fort Monroe ceased to operate as an Army installation in 2011.

Fort Monroe Authority executive director Glenn Oder says the public won’t notice anything different at the site.

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<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-transfer-update-20130524,0,6485832.story>

**Governor asked to accept Fort Monroe land**

**55 percent of property scheduled to transfer May 28**

By Robert Brauchle, [**rbrauchle@dailypress.com**](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | 757-247-2827

*May 24, 2013*

HAMPTON — The [**Fort Monroe**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) Authority has signed off on an Army offer to transfer close to 313 acres of the property at Old Point Comfort back to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Gov. [**Bob McDonnell**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/government/bob-mcdonnell-PEPLT007416.topic)'s signature is the last step before the transfer is complete.

"The idea of going through a protracted legal dispute, that would make it difficult to continue the momentum we've started out here," Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director [**Glenn Oder**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/g.-glenn-oder-PEPLT007430.topic) said.

With the governor's approval, the state will own the property including the stone fort, Continental Park, Wherry Quarter and portions of the Historic Village just west of the fort. Dog Beach, the marina and a half moon-shaped area bordering Mill Creek will remain in the Army's hands.

Thursday afternoon, the authority's board of trustees signed off on the Army's offer to transfer the property on Tuesday, May 28. That stance is a near 180-degree turn from its position on March 28 when the Army initially announced its intention to transfer 55 percent of the property.

"We don't know if they're agreeing to our terms, or if they're throwing out those talks, or another option," said Steve Owens, senior assistant attorney general, at the time of the Army's initial announcement. "We need more information from them."

Oder said the authority and Army have since agreed that many of the underground utilities will remain in the military's ownership until new agreements are drawn up between the service providers and the authority.

Once approved by the governor, the state will own and maintain the property, as well as 81 buildings once occupied by the Army.

This summer, roadway improvements and upgrades to signs and fire hydrants will likely take place, Oder said.

"The important thing is that this transfer is not a moment in time, but a period," Oder said.

The authority will also begin helping to pay for security patrols, using off-duty Hampton police officers on state-owned portions of the property, Oder said.

"We've received money from the state for maintenance, and you'll now see that money flowing into the community through contractors and other people working on Fort Monroe that are within the community," he said.

The Army took ownership of Fort Monroe in the 1830s knowing the land would transfer back to the Commonwealth of Virginia if the military no longer needed the property.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission agreed to decommission Fort Monroe in 2011, forcing the Army to move to Fort Eustis.

During its more than 150-year occupation of Fort Monroe, the Army filled in a portion of the property along Mill Creek and built a marina along the western wall, muddying the agreement with the state.

That new land and the marina are areas the Army says are not included in a clause stating the federal government will return the property to the state if it is not used by the military. The Army wants the state to pay for those parcels.

Those talks continue.

"Glenn and his team have done an outstanding job — owning no real estate — and they're showing a lot of life within this community," Authority Board of Trustees Chairwoman Terrie Suit said.

The chairwoman said the authority will focus its sights on making sure the remainder of the 565-acre property moves into the state's hands.

The Army manager at Fort Monroe, Jeffrey Pasquino, said the military will continue to be present on the fort to take care of the property it still owns.

"As long as we're here, we'll try to help in any way we can," he said.

[http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/ft-monroe-transfer-not-yet-final/#](http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/ft-monroe-transfer-not-yet-final/)

Ft. Monroe Transfer Not Yet Final

May 30, 2013

The Army has sent the necessary documents to the Virginia attorney general’s office to convey 313 acres at the former Fort Monroe to the commonwealth, but the transfer won’t occur until Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) signs off on it.

Since a surprise announcement two months ago, the Army has been pointing to May 28 to complete the transfer. The Army created a 60-day transition period “to make sure buildings are maintained, and to provide a smooth and orderly transition to state of Virginia’s management,” Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army for installations, energy and the environment, said on March 28.

Last week, the Fort Monroe Authority recommended the governor approve the transfer. It is not clear when McDonnell will consider the transaction, a spokesman told the [Daily Press](http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-mcdonnell-fort-monroe-transfer-20130529,0,371437.story%20).

The Army still will retain 252 acres after the transfer. Some will go to the National Park Service for the national monument; the LRA is in talks with the Army to obtain the remainder, according to the story.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-mcdonnell-fort-monroe-transfer-20130529,0,371437.story>

# Fort Monroe transfer still waiting state approval

## Attorney general's office reviewing documents

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | 757-247-2827

May 29, 2013

HAMPTON — The [U.S. Army](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/unrest-conflicts-war/defense/u.s.-army-ORGOV0000126141142.topic) filed documents Tuesday afternoon with the Virginia attorney general's office that, if accepted, will transfer just shy of 313 acres of [Fort Monroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) to the state.

The transfer requires Gov. [Bob McDonnell](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/government/bob-mcdonnell-PEPLT007416.topic)'s signature before it is finalized. A timeline for that process hasn't been set, according to a spokesman for the governor.

Fort Monroe remains in the Army's hands, even after a September 2011 decommissioning ceremony where then Garrison Commander Col. Anthony Reyes handed McDonnell a key to the 565-acre property.

Deeds dating to the 1830s stipulate that Fort Monroe will revert to the Commonwealth of Virginia when the land is no longer used for coastal defense.

So why has the transfer taken so long?

The Army must meet federal regulations by cleaning contaminants from the property. The Army and state have also clashed over utility agreements and land the military created along the southern edge of Mill Creek. The Army wants the state to pay for the land; the state believes the ground is a part of initial transfer agreement.

"It's taken slightly longer than we had planned," Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army, told reporters during the Army's March 28 transfer announcement.

At the time, Hammack said the Army would remain a caretaker on the 313 acres being transferred to the state until May 28.

The Army created the 60-day transition period "to make sure buildings are maintained, and to provide a smooth and orderly transition to state of Virginia's management," Hammack said in the initial transfer announcement. "It's something I thought we'd do a long time ago, but I'm delighted this has come to fruition."

Those 313 acres also make up just 55 percent of the property. A portion of that remaining 252 acres will be transferred to the National Park Service for the national monument, and the rest lies within areas Virginia and the Army are negotiating.

Tuesday afternoon, life on Fort Monroe appeared to be unaffected by the bureaucratic limbo.

Contractors mowed a lawn along Fenwick Road while workers from another company placed sealant on Ingalls Road. An Army-hired security firm continued its routine patrols.

Voice and email messages left with an Army spokesman seeking comment about the transition were not returned Tuesday.

Fort Monroe transfer timeline

Sept. 15, 2011: Garrison Commander Col. Anthony Reyes hands Gov. Bob McDonnell a symbolic key to the fort during a decommissioning ceremony. Gates open to the public later that day.

March 28, 2013: After more than a year of negotiations, the Army announces it will transfer the land in 60 days.

May 23, 2013: The Fort Monroe Authority Board of Trustees formally asks McDonnell to accept almost 313 acres from the Army.

May 28, 2013: The Army delivers documents to the state attorney general's office for the transfer.

[http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/lra-approves-transfer-of-ft-monroe-acreage/#](http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/lra-approves-transfer-of-ft-monroe-acreage/)

LRA Approves Transfer of Ft. Monroe Acreage

May 27, 2013

In a sharp turn from its position two months ago, the Fort Monroe Authority last week agreed to accept the transfer of 313 acres at the former installation from the Army.

If Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) signs off on the transfer, the property — located on the shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Hampton — could be transferred Tuesday, reported the [Daily Press](http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-transfer-update-20130524,0,6485832.story%20). The conveyance includes the stone fort, Continental Park, Wherry Quarter and parts of the Historic Village.

The Army’s surprise announcement on March 28 that it intended to transfer the property at the historic post initially alarmed officials with the state and LRA, who said talks over the ongoing environmental cleanup, the border of the property reverting to Virginia and other matters had not yet been resolved.

“The idea of going through a protracted legal dispute, that would make it difficult to continue the momentum we’ve started here,” LRA Executive Director Glenn Oder said Thursday.

Oder said the Army and authority had resolved one issue, with the Army retaining ownership of many of the underground utilities until the LRA reaches new agreements with the service providers.

About 375 acres of the 565-acre post are subject to revert to Virginia. The LRA is in talks with the Army to obtain the remainder of the property.

<http://www.capitalbay.com/news/washington-dc/virginia/hampton-roads/344608-va-likely-to-take-gain-300-acres-at-fort-monroe.html>

# [Va. likely to take gain 300 acres at Fort Monroe](http://www.capitalbay.com/news/washington-dc/virginia/hampton-roads/344608-va-likely-to-take-gain-300-acres-at-fort-monroe.html)

By CapitalBay Online 05/24/2013 09:11:00 // [News](http://www.capitalbay.com/news/index.1.html) | [Washington DC](http://www.capitalbay.com/news/washington-dc/index.1.html) | [Virginia](http://www.capitalbay.com/news/washington-dc/virginia/index.1.html) | [Hampton Roads](http://www.capitalbay.com/news/washington-dc/virginia/hampton-roads/index.1.html) | **Va. likely to take gain 300 acres at Fort Monroe**

HAMPTON (AP) -- Virginia is likely to take control of 300 acres of the 565-acre site around Fort Monroe by the end of the month.

Media outlets report that the Fort Monroe Authority voted Thursday to recommend Gov. Bob McDonnell accept the transfer of 312 acres by May 28.

The state had wanted all the land to revert to Virginia, but the Army wants to keep a large portion that includes a marina and other property.

Glenn Oder, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority, said Thursday, “Acceptance of the property demonstrates our good faith efforts to receive this property back into the control of the Commonwealth to preserve the history of the property and continue our momentum of appropriate adaptive reuse of Fort Monroe.”

Some land at the site was designated a national monument by President Barack Obama and will be transferred to the National Park Service for that purpose.

Fort Monroe ceased to operate as an Army installation in 2011.

Fort Monroe Authority executive director Glenn Oder says the public won't notice anything different at the site.

He said work continuing to develop a master plan for the long-term vision for Fort Monroe. That process, which has included several public meetings and community input, is expected to be completed sometime this summer.

<http://realradio804.com/virginia-to-control-300-acres-of-fort-monroe/>

## Virginia to control 300 acres of Fort Monroe

May 24, 2013 - By Brooks

Virginia is likely to take control of 300 acres of the 565-acre site around Fort Monroe by the end of the month. Media outlets report that the Fort Monroe Authority voted Thursday to recommend Gov. Bob McDonnell accept the transfer of 312 acres by May 28. The state had wanted all the land to revert to Virginia, but the Army wants to keep a large portion that includes a marina and other property. Some land at the site was designated a national monument by President Barack Obama and will be transferred to the National Park Service for that purpose. Fort Monroe ceased to operate as an Army installation in 2011. Fort Monroe Authority executive director Glenn Oder says the public won’t notice anything different at the site.

<http://rigell.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=337019>

**Daily Press: Congress may intervene with Fort Monroe land transfer**

**Washington, Jun 6** - By Robert Brauchle, rbrauchle@dailypress.com   
| 757-247-2827   
June 6, 2013

HAMPTON — Language included in a draft version of the National Defense Authorization bill may force the Army to transfer 70.4 acres to the Commonwealth of Virginia free of charge.   
  
That land — the marina and a half moon-shaped parcel just south of Mill Creek — are in addition to the 312.8 acres Gov. Bob McDonnell agreed to accept from the Army on Tuesday.   
  
The defense bill making its way through the U.S. House of Representatives and the negotiated land transfer both mark tangible progress in a negotiation between the state and Army that has been going on for close to two years.   
  
Deeds dating to the 1830s stipulate that Fort Monroe will revert to the Commonwealth of Virginia when the land is no longer used for coastal defense. During its 150-year occupation, the Army filled in land along Mill Creek and built a 332-slip marina, muddying those agreements.   
  
In March, the Army announced its willingness to transfer 312.8 acres to the state, but wants the state to pay for the 70.4 acres now outlined in the defense bill reviewed by the House Army Services' Readiness subcommittee this week.   
  
The National Park Service is expected to own 244 acres of the 565-acre property when the Army finally transfers the entire property.   
  
The defense bill, though, is an early indication that Congress may be willing to press its thumb on the Army if those disputed areas do not transfer this calendar year.   
  
"We are hopeful, and optimistic, that the Army and (Fort Monroe Authority) will reach a negotiated settlement to the disputed properties which would obviate the need for the

legislative language," U.S. Rep Scott Rigell's office said in a prepared statement.   
  
Rigell's statement indicates the Virginia Beach Republican, whose district includes Fort Monroe, worked with Rep. Rob Wittman, chairman of the Readiness subcommittee, to insert the language in the defense bill.   
  
The National Defense Authority Act – if passed with the Fort Monroe clause – would overstep any negotiations between the state and Army.   
  
An Army spokesman said the military does not comment on pending legislation.   
  
The military has asked that the state pay for the 70.4 acres outlined in the defense bill through an "economic development conveyance." The Fort Monroe Authority has maintained the areas are covered in the original deeds.   
  
The proposed fiscal year 2014 Defense Authorization bill must be approved by the House and the Senate. The current act was passed by the House in May 2012 and the Senate in mid-December 2012. It took effect Jan. 1, 2013.   
  
Fort Monroe Authority Board of Trustees chairwoman Terrie Suit said the authority reached out to the state's congressional delegates this spring to aide with negotiations.   
  
"We didn't feel the process was moving with the momentum we were hoping for," Suit said. "Scott Rigell really wanted to be helpful to move that process along."   
  
Suit said the state and Army have since "actively engaged" in dialogue to transfer the property.   
  
"We want to be in a partnership with the Army during this process," she said.   
  
Suit said the paperwork signed by McDonnell to transfer Fort Monroe still needs to be recorded with the court. Once that happens, the governor's office is expected to announce the transfer of 312.8 acres.   
  
A message left at Wittman's Washington, D.C., office Thursday afternoon was not returned.   
<http://hamptonroads.com/2013/06/land-dispute-delays-handover-fort-monroe-property>

**Land dispute delays handover of Fort Monroe property**

By [Bill Bartel](http://hamptonroads.com/bbartel)  
The Virginian-Pilot  
© June 7, 2013

Congress is getting involved in a dispute between the Army and Virginia officials over valuable Fort Monroe assets, including a marina, that has stalled the transfer of some of the property to the state.

At U.S. Rep. Scott Rigell's request, a small section that would settle the dispute in the state's favor was included in a large defense spending bill approved early Thursday by the House Armed Services Committee.

If the Army and state can't reach agreement on the disputed property - about 70 acres, including a 332-slip marina at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay - the land would be turned over to Virginia, according to the language in the bill. If the property is ever sold, the Army and state would split the proceeds.

The Army departed from the historic fort in 2011, and a swath of the 565-acre property was designated by President Barack Obama as a national historic monument a few months later. That land will be transferred to the National Park Service.

But until this week, the Army had yet to turn over any of the property to the commonwealth, partly because of disputes about the marina.

On Thursday, Gov. Bob McDonnell's office announced the formal transfer of 312 acres of federal property to the state - not including the disputed land.

"We look forward to continuing the work with the Secretary of the Army to secure the remaining portions of Fort Monroe, as well as the transfer to the National Park Service," McDonnell said in a prepared statement.

The dispute over the 70.4 acres has its roots in the fort's earliest days. In the early 1800s, the commonwealth turned over the land for the new fort to the Army. Decades later, the acreage grew as the Army filled in some areas that had been underwater. The marina was built later.

After Congress decided in the 2005 round of base closings that the Army should leave Fort Monroe, the state contended that all the property should be returned to the people of Virginia.

The Army disagreed, arguing that the added acreage, including the marina, was not part of the original land deeded by the commonwealth. It contends that the state should buy the land. No price has been made public.

Rigell, a Virginia Beach Republican whose district includes the fort, said Thursday that if the two sides reach an agreement before the defense bill is passed, the proposal will be dropped.

The measure is a "pressure point" intended to prod the Army to turn over the property, Rigell said. "I had hoped the legislation wouldn't be needed. But I think it is."

The office of Katherine Hammack, the Army's undersecretary for installations, could not be reached for comment.

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-takes-control-of-312-acres-at-fort-monroe/2013/06/06/6139546c-ced8-11e2-8573-3baeea6a2647_story.html>

Virginia takes control of 312 acres at Fort Monroe

### By Associated Press,

### Associated Press

**Jun 06, 2013 06:56 PM EDT**

### AP

### Published: June 6

HAMPTON, Va. — Virginia has taken control of 312 acres of the 565-acre site around Fort Monroe in Hampton.

Gov. Bob McDonnell’s office said Thursday that he signed paperwork accepting the land this week.

The state had wanted all the land to revert to Virginia, but the Army wants to keep a large portion that includes a marina and other property.

Fort Monroe Authority executive director Glenn Oder says the move is a critical first step in Virginia receiving all of the fort’s property back. Negotiations continue on additional land.

In addition to the quitclaim deed, McDonnell also signed agreements outlining operations of utilities, property maintenance, and security while the remaining property ownership issues are negotiated.

Work continues on a master long-term plan for Fort Monroe. The process that has included several public meetings and community input is expected to be completed sometime this summer.

Some land at the site was designated a national monument by President Barack Obama and will be transferred to the National Park Service for that purpose.

Fort Monroe was the third-oldest U.S. Army post in continuous active service until it closed in 2011. Dutch traders first brought enslaved Africans to the fort in 1619. During the Civil War it became a place where escaped slaves could find refuge. Confederate President Jefferson Davis also was imprisoned there after the war.

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<http://www.governor.virginia.gov/news/viewRelease.cfm?id=1834>

### Governor McDonnell Signs Fort Monroe Quitclaim Deed

**FORT MONROE** - Earlier this week, Governor Bob McDonnell signed a quitclaim deed and authorized the execution of the Memorandum of Understanding for the transition plan and the Right-of-Entry agreement for the maintenance and operation of the utility systems at Fort Monroe.

The quitclaim deed brings 312 acres back into the ownership and control of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Right-of-Entry agreements outline the joint operations of utilities, property maintenance, and security of the property during the period of time that the Department of the Army and the FMA negotiate the remaining property ownership issues.

Speaking about the action, Governor McDonnell remarked, "We are pleased that a portion of Fort Monroe is being reunified with the Commonwealth. We look forward to continuing the work with the Secretary of the Army to secure the remaining portions of Fort Monroe, as well as the transfer to the National Park Service."

"This is a critical first step in receiving all of the property back into the ownership of the Commonwealth of Virginia," said Glenn Oder, Executive Director of the Fort Monroe Authority. "Negotiations continue on additional parcels of land at the 565-acre site. Our team has worked tirelessly to ensure the interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth were protected in this transfer and that environmental and other key issues were adequately addressed. This will allow the Fort Monroe Authority to continue its success in bringing people back to Fort Monroe. We will also continue to work with the National Park Service to transfer property to them as soon as possible."

Fort Monroe was an Army installation from 1819 until September 2011 when it was deactivated as a result of the 2005 BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure Commission). Its major tenant, TRACDOC (Training and Doctrine Command) was relocated to JBLE (Joint Base Langley-Eustis) at Fort Eustis, VA. On November 1, 2011 President Obama declared Fort Monroe a National Monument under the Antiquities Act. Fort Monroe has had a significant part in the history of our nation spanning over 400 years-from the journeys of Captain John Smith, a haven of freedom for the enslaved during the Civil War, and a bastion of defense for the Chesapeake Bay.

Work is continuing on the development of a master plan for the long-term vision for Fort Monroe. That process, which has included several public meetings and community input, is expected to be completed sometime this summer. Meanwhile, the transformation of Fort Monroe is already taking place. The Fort Monroe Authority will continue to partner with the City of Hampton and the National Park Service as Fort Monroe becomes a popular place to live, work, find entertainment, enjoy nature, and learn about history.

"We are pleased with the number of home rentals, new businesses, and the people who are coming to enjoy the Casemate Museum and public programs at Fort Monroe," Oder said. "It is clear that people appreciate not only the history and beauty of this property, but the wonderful opportunities that it offers."

For more information, contact Phyllis Terrell, 757-251-2754 or [PTerrell@fmauthority.com](mailto:PTerrell@fmauthority.com).

<http://www.wset.com/story/22523170/va-takes-control-of-312-acres-at-fort-monroe>

**Va takes control of 312 acres at Fort Monroe**

*Posted: Jun 06, 2013 2:39 PM EDT*

HAMPTON, Va. (AP) - Virginia has taken control of 312 acres of the 565-acre site around Fort Monroe in Hampton.

Gov. Bob McDonnell's office said Thursday that he signed paperwork accepting the land this week.

The state had wanted all the land to revert to Virginia, but the Army wants to keep a large portion that includes a marina and other property.

Fort Monroe Authority executive director Glenn Oder says the move is a critical first step in Virginia receiving all of the fort's property back. Negotiations continue on additional land.

Some land at the site was designated a national monument by President Barack Obama and will be transferred to the National Park Service for that purpose.

Fort Monroe was the third-oldest U.S. Army post in continuous active service until it closed in 2011.

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<http://insidebiz.com/news/army-fort-monroe-authority-are-odds-over-70-acres>

# Army, Fort Monroe Authority are at odds over 70 acres

#### Posted: June 14, 2013

[](http://insidebiz.com/files/ibiz/imagecache/fulllsize/pictures/fort_monroe_0.jpg)

By Lydia Wheeler

[lydia.wheeler@insidebiz.com](mailto:lydia.wheeler@insidebiz.com)

The Army and state of Virginia are in dispute over 70 acres of land and a 332-slip marina at Fort Monroe.

The 565-acre former Army post on the Chesapeake Bay is managed by the Fort Monroe Authority, a political subdivision established by the state. The original deed for the property stipulates the land is to revert back to the state at no cost when the military stops using it. But the Army claims that 70 acres, known as the North Gate area, were not part of the original property.

The fort, which was built to guard the channel between the Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads after the War of 1812, opened in 1819. The Army, however, abandoned the post in September 2011 as a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission process.

The 70-acre parcel is land that did not appear in earlier land surveys. U.S. Rep. Scott Rigell, R-Virginia Beach, said the additional acreage is a result of fill from both the Army and the environment. Because the dispute was stalling the land transfer, Rigell asked to have language added to the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act that would give the commonwealth between the Army and the Fort Monroe Authority. Any proceeds would be payable over a period of seven years.

The House of Representatives was expected to be vote on the defense spending bill Friday, after press time. Rigell said last week he was confident the act would pass.

"50/50 is as fair as one could make it," Rigell said. "They want to get what they think is fair market value for the property."

The Army contracts with Guest Services to operate the Old Comfort Point Marina and slip rental. A restaurant - The Marina Cafe - is also on the property, said Glenn Oder, executive director of the Fort Monroe Authority.

Though grateful for the congressman's action, the authority is hoping to reach an agreement with the Army on its own, Oder said. If an agreement is reached and the language in the bill is not needed, Rigell said it would be removed.

But Oder said there is no need to rush an agreement now that 313 acres have been reverted back to the commonwealth.

On June 6, Gov. Bob McDonnell's office announced the governor's authorization of a quitclaim deed transferring the maintenance and operation of the utility systems at Fort Monroe to the authority.

"We are pleased that a portion of Fort Monroe is being reunified with the commonwealth," McDonnell said in a news release. "We look forward to continuing the work with the Secretary of the Army to secure the remaining portions of Fort Monroe, as well as the transfer to the National Park Service."

According to the authority, the park service will acquire 244 of the 565 acres, which was last assessed by the city of Hampton for nearly $275 million.

"Most of the land is open space," Oder said.

Of the 176 residential units at Fort Monroe, 160 are leasable and 133 are leased. The property also has more than 1.5 million square feet of commercial space, much of which, Oder said, was residential space that the Army converted into office space. The authority is considering converting some of the space back to residential units.

"We are very pleased with the results of our residential leasing activities," Oder said. "We have a lot of commercial interest at Fort Monroe, but because we didn't know when the property would transfer and when we could negotiate directly with investors... it's been more cumbersome than you would generally find in the commonwealth."

Before the governor's action, leases formerly had to be approved by the Army Corps of Engineers.

"We've eliminated a lot of the middle-man now thanks to the acceptance of the governor's quit claim deed," he said.

In addition to 70 acres, an agreement with Dominion Power concerning capital improvements to the fort's electrical grid and power supply is also in dispute.

Rigell said the Army expects the Fort Monroe Authority to take over an annual bill from Dominion Power. But the authority had not been aware the bill existed.

When asked the cost of the bill, Phyllis Terrell, an authority spokeswoman, said the Army would be better suited to answer that question.

"It may be a litigated question with the Department of the Army and Dominion Power," she said.

Calls made to the U.S. Attorney General's Office, which is handling Fort Monroe negotiations on behalf of the Army, were not returned by deadline.

<http://www.ahipcup.net/land-dispute-delays-handover-of-fort-monroe-property-the-virginian/>

[Land brawl delays handover of Fort Monroe skill – The Virginian](http://www.ahipcup.net/land-dispute-delays-handover-of-fort-monroe-property-the-virginian/)

On June 7, 2013, in [*news*](http://www.ahipcup.net/category/news/), by Services

By Bill Bartel  
The Virginian-Pilot  
© Jun 7, 2013

Congress is removing concerned in a brawl between a Army and Virginia officials over profitable Fort Monroe assets, including a marina, that has stalled a send of some of a skill to a state.

At U.S. Rep. Scott Rigell's request, a tiny territory that would settle a brawl in a state's preference was enclosed in a vast invulnerability spending check authorized early Thursday by a House Armed Services Committee.

If a Army and state can't strech agreement on a doubtful skill - about 70 acres, including a 332-slip jetty during a mouth of a Chesapeake Bay - a land would be incited over to Virginia, according to a denunciation in a bill. If a skill is ever sold, a Army and state would separate a proceeds.

The Army over from a ancestral installation in 2011, and a swath of a 565-acre skill was designated by President Barack Obama as a inhabitant ancestral relic a few months later. That land will be eliminated to a National Park Service.

But until this week, a Army had nonetheless to spin over any of a skill to a commonwealth, partly since of disputes about a marina.

On Thursday, Gov. Bob McDonnell's bureau announced a grave send of 312 acres of sovereign skill to a state - not including a doubtful land.

"We demeanour brazen to stability a work with a Secretary of a Army to secure a remaining portions of Fort Monroe, as good as a send to a National Park Service," McDonnell pronounced in a prepared statement.

The brawl over a 70.4 acres has a roots in a fort's beginning days. In a early 1800s, a country incited over a land for a new installation to a Army. Decades later, a acreage grew as a Army filled in some areas that had been underwater. The jetty was built later.

After Congress motionless in a 2005 spin of bottom closings that a Army should leave Fort Monroe, a state contended that all a skill should be returned to a people of Virginia.

The Army disagreed, arguing that a combined acreage, including a marina, was not partial of a strange land deeded by a commonwealth. It contends that a state should buy a land. No cost has been done public.

Rigell, a Virginia Beach Republican whose district includes a fort, pronounced Thursday that if a dual sides strech an agreement before a invulnerability check is passed, a offer will be dropped.

The magnitude is a "pressure point" dictated to poke a Army to spin over a property, Rigell said. "I had hoped a legislation wouldn't be needed. But we consider it is."

The bureau of Katherine Hammack, a Army's undersecretary for installations, could not be reached for comment.

*Bill Bartel, 757-446-2398, bill.bartel@pilotonline.com*

[http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/defense-bill-language-could-ease-return-of-ft-monroe-parcel/#](http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/defense-bill-language-could-ease-return-of-ft-monroe-parcel/)

June 6, 2013

Defense Bill Language Could Ease Return of Ft. Monroe Parcel - See more at: <http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines/defense-bill-language-could-ease-return-of-ft-monroe-parcel/#sthash.jfHieHBt.dpuf>

The Fort Monroe Authority may not need to negotiate with the Army over the purchase price for a 70-acre parcel at the historic post not included in the acreage already reverting to the commonwealth of Virginia. A provision in the House version of the fiscal 2014 defense authorization bill directs the Army to convey the tract as close in time as possible to the transfer of 372 acres of the post already slated to return to the commonwealth. The Army and the LRA have been negotiating over the terms of conveying the parcel, but the bill language could force the Army to transfer it at no cost, reported the Daily Press. Authority officials reached out to the state’s congressional delegation earlier this year to speed up the discussions over transferring the property.“We are hopeful, and optimistic, that the Army and (Fort Monroe Authority) will reach a negotiated settlement to the disputed properties which would obviate the need for the legislative language,” according to a statement from Rep. Scott Rigell’s (R) office. The authorization bill goes to the House floor next week. Meanwhile, Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) signed the necessary documents this week to accept 313 acres at the closed installation from the Army. The transfer will be final as soon as the paperwork is recorded with the court. **CASEMATE MUSEUM**

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-hampton-university-casemate-20130530,0,5127765.story>

**Could Hampton University run Fort Monroe's Casemate museum?**

**College officials says school has resources, know how for the job**

By Robert Brauchle, [**rbrauchle@dailypress.com**](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | 757-247-2827

*May 30, 2013*

HAMPTON — For years [**Fort Monroe**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) and [**Hampton University**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/education/colleges-universities/hampton-university-OREDU0000113.topic) have tread along parallel, albeit distinctly separate paths. The latter as an educational institution borne from the emancipation of escaped slaves. The former as a military installation where the "contraband of war" decision was made.

Hampton University Associate Vice President of Governmental Affairs W.L. "Bill" Thomas Jr. is pushing for the history of the school and fort to be told by the same institution.

Thomas wants Hampton University to operate Fort Monroe's Casemate Museum.

"We have qualified museum staff, a collection with over 9,000 objects and the capabilities to operate that facility," Thomas said. "This is a perfect opportunity to look at the fort and the Civil War from a different perspective."

Fort Monroe officials said they are open to a future partnership with Hampton University. Handing over the Casemate Museum to the school, however, might not be a direction the authority wants to head.

"We definitely feel like there's a symbiotic relationship between Fort Monroe and Hampton University," Fort Monroe Authority Board of Trustees chairwoman Terrie Suit said. "Hampton University and its campus has always felt like an extension of Fort Monroe."

The Army decommissioned Fort Monroe as an active military base in September 2011, and has since staffed and maintained the museum located within the fort's stone walls.

"Our focus right now is on this transfer of property with the Army," Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director [**Glenn Oder**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/g.-glenn-oder-PEPLT007430.topic) said.

The Army is scheduled to transfer almost 313 acres of Fort Monroe to the authority on May 28. The authority had planned to take ownership of the museum and display the Army-owned artifacts beginning this September.

Allowing Hampton University to step in and take over operations is a significant shift from that plan.

"Right now, we can't do anything the Army doesn't bless," Suit said. "If for any reason, there's some restrictions with the Army, then we'll look for other opportunities to work with Hampton University."

Hampton University's museum includes exhibits of art and costumes from Native Americans and cultures throughout Africa. The Casemate Museum's exhibits focus on the fort and its military history.

The authority has already partnered with Hampton University to apply for grants. The university and fort may also collaborate on a program allowing students to gain experience by working at the Casemate, said Shawn Halifax, Fort Monroe Authority director of public programs.

"It was an Army museum. Right now we're looking at what the museum is, and we're trying to redefine what it can be," Halifax said. "It will still tell that Army history, but it can also be so much more."

Oder said he has reached out to nearby museums since taking the position in August 2011. Ideally, the facilities should collaborate to schedule events, advertise and share exhibits.

"I'm welcome to sharing resources and expertise so that all of these museums can be successful," he said.

Suit said the authority will work with Hampton University.

"We're not restricted to just one museum," she said. "The whole place is practically a museum."

**CONTRABAND DECISION COMMEMORATION EVENT**

<http://www.insidehampton.com/stories/520562-community-contraband-decision-commemoration-set-for-may-25-at-fort-monroe-theatre>

# Contraband Decision commemoration set for May 25 at Fort Monroe Theatre

The National Park Service will commemorate the 152nd anniversary of the Contraband Decision starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 25, at Fort Monroe Theatre in Hampton.

According to a park service press release, "Three enslaved men – Frank Baker, James Townsend and Shepherd Mallory – escaped and sought freedom with the Union Army at Fort Monroe during the Civil War. This act of bravery and Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler's Contraband Decision led to thousands more seeking refuge here, earning the fort the name Freedom's Fortress. Explore this rich history and learn how these events contributed to the history of the United States and the Emancipation Proclamation. Hourly living history tours will be held from 1- 4 p.m. at Cannon Park."

Tickets are not required for this free event.

Fort Monroe Theatre is at 42 Tidball Road.

For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/fomr](http://www.nps.gov/fomr).

<http://www.thenewjournalandguide.com/community/item/2859-152nd-anniversary-of-the-contraband-decision>

## 152nd Anniversary of the Contraband Decision

***Saturday, May 25, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Fort Monroe***  
Commemorates the escape of three slaves to Fort Monroe and the decision to declare them “contraband of war,” which led thousands to escape to “Freedom’s Fortress.”

Begins at 10 a.m. at the Fort Monroe Theatre; hourly tours start at Cannon Park from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sponsored by The National Park Service, The Contraband Historical Society, Hampton Parks and Recreation, and the Fort Monroe Authority.

[www.dailypress.com/features/history/dp-hamptons-contraband-slave-village-20130521,0,4014959.post](http://www.dailypress.com/features/history/dp-hamptons-contraband-slave-village-20130521,0,4014959.post)

## A close look at Hampton's contraband slave village

By [Mark St. John Erickson](http://bio.tribune.com/markerickson), [merickson@dailypress.com](mailto:merickson@dailypress.com) | 757-247-4783

9:46 AM EDT, May 21, 2013

HAMPTON

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Among the very best views of the sprawling fugitive slave village that rose up in the ruins of Hampton during the Civil War is a December 1864 photograph taken by famed photographer Timothy O'Sullivan.

Probably shot from the roof or cupola of the city's old courthouse, which had been converted into a bustling school by Northern abolitionist missionaries and runaway slaves, it looks west towards the burned-out brick shell of St. John's Church and a panoramic landscape filled with slab-wood shacks and fenced-in gardens.

Some 7,000 people flocked here during the war after Union Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler of Fort Monroe made his landmark decision to offer asylum to fugitive bondsmen as "contraband of war." Later historians have described this pioneering group, which organized their own schools and churches in a defiant effort to carve out lives as free men, as "Freedom's First Generation."

Click on the enlarged pdf file and you'll be able to see not only the individual cabins and the shadowy figures of some of the contrabands but also the tidy fenced lots where they supplemented their meager rations with gardens. You can also see a small part of dirt-paved Queen Street running diagonally from left to right as well a now filled-in branch of the Hampton River.

To the far right is the southern part of the 17.7-acre tract that is now slated by the city for the construction of a new court house as well as private development. If you zoom in on the pdf file, you easily see that the cabins continue to run in that direction as well as far off to the west.

Just how much of the property was covered by the homes of the fugitive slaves is unknown. But a recent map of African-American landmarks created by Hampton University architecture students under the supervision of Prof. Carmina Sanchez-del-Valle shows the village extending well to the north of current-day Lincoln Street, perhaps nearly as far as Pembroke Avenue, and to the west past Armistead Avenue.

Archaeologists familiar with Hampton's history believe there's a high likelihood that some of the historic camp's features may be preserved under the surface. They also believe that a nearby mid-17th-century site unearthed on the other side of Pembroke Avenue in 1996 suggests there's a good chance of finding more of the city's pioneering early colonial landscape under the surface, too.

Still, any investigation will have to be preceded by a thorough study of surviving records, including a 1878 map and this photograph as well as one other taken by O'Sullivan at the same time, the archaeologists say. And only after that can anyone really begin to talk about whether or not it's worth finding the funding to put a shovel in the ground. -- Mark St. John Erickson

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**CITY COUNCIL TOUR OF FORT MONROE**

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-pvw-nws-hampton-cigarette-gifts-20130612,0,4070190.story>

# Hampton City Council tours Fort Monroe

## Council to hold several meetings Wednesday at Fort Monroe, City Hall

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | 757-247-2827

June 12, 2013

HAMPTON — The [Hampton](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/hampton-%28hampton-virginia%29-PLGEO100101154030000.topic) City Council is scheduled to hold a series of meetings Wednesday that begin with an early morning tour of [Fort Monroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) and will likely end after dusk in City Hall.

The group is expected to discuss a wide range of topics throughout the day including:

* The state's ownership of more than 300 acres of Fort Monroe and the master plans being created for the entire 565-acre property.
* The city's ability to accept gifts. The conversation relates to the city Police Division's undercover cigarette sting.
* A proposal to tighten council members' ability to request agenda items without support from the remaining group.
* Numerous fund transfers to help pay for security at the former site of the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Disabled, as well as paying for utility costs at the [Virginia Air and Space Center](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/science-technology/space-programs/virginia-air-space-center-PLCUL000230.topic).

The Fort Monroe tour begins at 9:30 a.m. A 1 p.m. meeting at the Bay Breeze Community Center will be held after lunch. The group then moves to City Hall where a 6 p.m. public comment period will take place and then a 7 p.m. regular City Council meeting.

A full agenda for Wednesday's meetings can be found at <http://www.hampton.gov> under the City Council tab.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-tour-20130613,0,119660.story>

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | 757-247-2827

June 13, 2013

HAMPTON — Could an airplane land on Walker Airfield, or a shuttered artillery battery one day be used as a bath house? Why isn't the second pier along the sea wall open to the public?

The short response: The city of [Hampton](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/hampton-%28hampton-virginia%29-PLGEO100101154030000.topic), [Fort Monroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) Authority and National Park Service are working on those answers.

City Council members interested in the unfolding plans at Fort Monroe toured the 565-acre facility Wednesday morning to begin a round robin day of meetings at the decommissioned military post and City Hall.

The city now leases the beaches, ball fields, community center and Engineers Pier at Fort Monroe.

The National Park Service and Fort Monroe Authority are creating policies guiding how the property will be used. While those plans have not yet been finalized, both groups are pushing to entice the civilian population to visit Fort Monroe.

Wednesday morning, City Council members and staff walked up the earthen casemates, toured a community center where the [YMCA](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/social-issues/ymca-ORNPR000242.topic) is holding a summer camp and trekked across a portion of the inner moat area.

Plans are beginning to take shape now, but there are still things up the staff's sleeve, Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director [Glenn Oder](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/g.-glenn-oder-PEPLT007430.topic) said.

"What we want Fort Monroe to be is a great venue," he said. "We want more and more opportunities to bring people out here."

So what's most needed right now?

"We desperately need restrooms at Fort Monroe," Oder said.

The next public event being held at Fort Monroe is a performance by the Fleet Forces Band wind ensemble at 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 13 in Continental Park.

**NEW ROUND OF BRAC DISCUSSION**

<http://www.army.mil/article/105538/Infrastructure_costs_eating_into_readiness__says_Army_leader/>

# Infrastructure costs eating into readiness, says Army leader

June 13, 2013

By [David Vergun](http://www.army.mil/search/articles/index.php?search=David+Vergun)

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, June 13, 2013) -- Millions of dollars are being wasted maintaining buildings and installations that are underutilized and dilapidated, said the Army's top custodian of those spaces.  
  
Those dollars could instead go toward improving Army readiness and modernization, said Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment.  
  
But first, Congress would need to authorize another round of base realignment and closure, or BRAC, and provide funding to tear down failing structures, she said.  
  
MILLIONS WASTED  
  
As an example, Hammack cited a vacant building at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. There, the Army is spending $1 million a year to maintain that building because there is no money to demolish it, she said.  
  
Buildings such as the one at Aberdeen are vacant and falling apart across the Army, Hammack said, and that means money is being wasted.  
  
The problem is exacerbated as the military drawdown continues, she said.  
  
As tens of thousands of Soldiers are reduced from the ranks, their living and working spaces become vacant, she said, pointing out that a brigade combat team, or BCT, uses around a million square feet of space, the size of about 20 football fields.  
  
By the end of fiscal year 2017, the active-duty Army will decrease its end strength from 570,000 to 490,000. The Army National Guard will reduce from 358,000 to 353,000. The Army Reserve has already reduced to 205,000.  
  
Earlier this year, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Ray Odierno said decreased end strength will result in at least eight fewer active-duty BCTs. The Army will go from 45 BCTs to 37.  
  
Vacant buildings have a cost associated with them, because they must be maintained for safety and environmental reasons, Hammack said. For instance, air conditioning is needed to prevent mold, and water lines need to be maintained in case of fire.  
  
Hammack said there is a 15-year backlog of buildings in "failing condition," and that's growing every year.  
  
DOING THINGS RIGHT  
  
Army installations in Europe point the way on how to best manage infrastructure as forces draw down and the budget declines, she said. In Europe, the Army and the Defense Department have authority on infrastructure reduction.  
  
As the size of the force in Europe, primarily Germany, grows smaller, the Army is reducing its infrastructure accordingly, she said. She cited current and projected savings from 2007 to 2017:  
  
During the 10-year period between 2007 and 2017, the force will shrink by about 45 percent. The Army is reducing infrastructure by more than 50 percent, with savings in base operating costs of around 58 percent, she said.  
  
The surrounding communities have seen benefits as well, she said. Europeans are using the installations for schools, office buildings, homes and so on.  
  
The same thing is happening in the U.S. as a result of the last BRAC round in 2005, she said.  
  
At Fort Monmouth, N.J., a BRAC 2005-targeted installation, evacuees from Hurricane Sandy are taking up residence until they can get their lives back together, she said.  
  
Elsewhere on Monmouth, a communications company is moving into industrial buildings and warehouses and an urgent care clinic is going up to serve the local community. Other buildings are being leased or rented out, she said.  
  
Another recently shuttered installation, Fort Monroe, Va., has already seen about 60 percent of its buildings put into productive reuse as residences, industrial and commercial facilities. A marina, lodging and a park remain to be transferred, she said.  
  
Installations can be transformed rapidly, she said, thanks to the efforts of state, county and community reuse authority commissions, which work to market the infrastructure to industry and other development.  
  
Often, installations have access to rail lines and highways. They also usually have the proper zoning and facilities in place for high-tech or heavy industry.  
  
Hammack said she's hopeful the Army will eventually get the authority and resources it desperately needs so it won't have to continue maintaining excess infrastructure.

That money can then go where it's really needed, she said: "to the warfighters."

<http://blog.al.com/breaking/2013/06/army_says_its_spending_million.html>

Army says it's spending millions to maintain dilapidated buildings, joins push for new round of BRAC (updated)

By [Leada Gore | lgore@al.com](http://connect.al.com/staff/LeadaGore/posts.html)The Huntsville Times  
Email the author | [Follow on Twitter](https://twitter.com/LeadaGore)  
on June 21, 2013 at 9:30 AM, updated June 21, 2013 at 1:50 PM

The Army is beating Department of Defense's BRAC drum but the tune continues to fall on deaf ears in Congress, where members are vowing to stop any base closures before they even start.

The Pentagon's 2014 budget request seeks to shed excess infrastructure with a new round of base realignments and closures starting in 2015. Those changes would particularly impact Army facilities as it continues with on-going force reductions.

"BRAC is a comprehensive and fair tool that allows communities a role in re-use decisions for the property and provides redevelopment assistance," Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said. Hagel said BRAC does involve significant up-front costs, but said, "in the long term, there are significant savings. The previous five rounds of BRAC are saving $12 billion annually."

Katherine Hammack, assistant secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment, said the service is wasting millions of dollars to maintain buildings and installations that are underutilized and dilapidated. That money, she said, would be better used towards improving Army readiness and modernization, especially as the force struggles to deal with sequestration-related cutbacks.

The Pentagon is [banking heavily on another round](http://blog.al.com/breaking/2013/06/pentagons_push_for_new_round_o.html) of base realignments and closures as part of its 2014 budget plan. The Pentagon contends it has 24 percent excess inventory and closures would result in savings of more than $2.4 billion over the next five years. Opponents - and there are many - dispute those savings, saying BRAC costs more than it's worth. The House has already put wording to prevent a new round of BRAC in its defense authorization bill and Senate leaders are poised to do the same.

The Pentagon isn't giving up on the push, however.

**Pentagon: Millions of dollars wasted**

Hammack said the excess facilities translate to millions of wasted dollars for the Army. She pointed to a vacant building at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland where the Army is spending $1 million a year to maintain a building because there is no money to demolish it.

Buildings, such as the one at Aberdeen, are vacant and falling apart across the Army, Hammack said, which means wasted money. The problem is exacerbated as the service cuts its ranks in the coming years, leaving living and working spaces vacant.

Hammack said a brigade combat team uses around a million square feet of space, roughly the size of 20 football fields. The Army is planning to cut at least eight brigade combat teams, dropping from 45 to 37, leaving it with at least 8 million excess square feet through those reductions alone.

By the end of 2017, the active-duty Army will decrease its end strength from 570,000 to 490,000 and the Army National Guard will reduce from 358,000 to 353,000. The Army Reserve has already reduced to 205,000.

Hammack said keeping vacant buildings open means the Army must continue to pay upkeep, citing examples of keeping water on in buildings for fire prevention. The 15-year backlog of buildings the Army considers in "failing condition" continues to grow, she said.

**No BRAC needed for European facilities**

The Pentagon points to its facilities in Europe as the best way to manage infrastructure. The Army and Department of Defense have authority over infrastructure reduction in Europe and no BRAC is required to shed excess facilities there. As the size of the country's force in Europe is falling, particularly in Germany, the Army is reducing its infrastructure accordingly, Hammack said.

According to the Pentagon, force size in Europe will drop 45 percent by 2017. The Army is reducing inventory there by 50 percent, with savings in base operations of about 58 percent. The Army facilities are being transformed into schools, office buildings and homes.

In the U.S., the Army is pointing to places like Fort Monmouth, N.J., and Fort Monroe, Va., as success stories from the 2005 BRAC. Both installations are being transformed, with office buildings, medical clinics, industrial and commercial facilities opening at each site.

That's not enough to convince lawmakers, however.

**Congress says 'no' to BRAC**

Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Huntsville, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, [supported](http://blog.al.com/breaking/2013/03/congress_tells_white_house_to.html) the Defense Authorization Act that included a ban on a new round of BRAC. He said his opposition to the most recent BRAC request is related to his distrust of how the Obama administration would handle the changes.

"The Obama Administration has shown time and again that it is more than willing to improperly use federal government power to reward its political allies and punish its political foes. Alabama has repeatedly and overwhelmingly voted to reject Obama's policies. Hence, I will not vote for a BRAC so long as President Obama is in office out of concern the Obama Administration will use its political power and influence to close bases, such as Redstone Arsenal, in Red States, so that it can reward military installations in Blue States," he said.

"Forty-three months from now, when President Obama's term expires, I will consider voting for a BRAC provided I am confident base realignments and closures will save defense dollars and be implemented in a non-partisan manner."

The overwhelming anti-BRAC sentiment isn't enough to deter the Pentagon just yet, however.

Hammack said she's hopeful the Army will eventually get the authority and resources it needs so it won't have to continue maintaining excess infrastructure. That money can then go where it's really needed, she said: "to the warfighters."

Updated 6/21 at 1:50 p.m. to include additional quote from Rep. Mo Brooks.

**FOURTH AT THE FORT**

[://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-fireworks-20130625,0,1172918.story](http://www.dailypress.com/news/hampton/dp-nws-fort-monroe-fireworks-20130625,0,1172918.story)

July 4 fireworks return to Fort Monroe

By Robert Brauchle, [rbrauchle@dailypress.com](mailto:rbrauchle@dailypress.com) | 757-247-2827

June 25, 2013

HAMPTON — The jubilee long associated with Independence Day is returning to [Fort Monroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) after a year-long absence from the decommissioned Army post.

After decades of July 4 concerts and fireworks on Fort Monroe organized by [the Army](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/unrest-conflicts-war/defense/u.s.-army-ORGOV0000126141142.topic), the state entity now operating the property did not have enough funding to organize such an event last year.

This year, the Fort Monroe Foundation has scheduled a day of events on July 4 culminating with a 9:30 p.m. fireworks display being lit close to artillery batteries Parrott and Irwin.

Those events include:

•US Fleet Forces Band Wind Ensemble performing at 7 p.m. in Continental Park.

•The Paradise Ocean Club will host country music artist [Kip Moore](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/entertainment/music/kip-moore-PECLB00000013887.topic).

• The Freedom Support Center is hosting a free event for active duty service members, veterans and their families just north of Outlook Beach. Military identification is required to attend.

Visitors planning to see the fireworks should arrive at Fort Monroe prior to 9 p.m. After that time, police will turn vehicles away to prepare the entrance so spectators can leave the property. A safety zone for boaters will be created around the area where fireworks lit. A section of the eastern boardwalk will also be closed while fireworks are set up.

Residents in Phoebus and [Buckroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/buckroe-PLGEO100101154010000.topic) should be aware that traffic signals will be adjusted to help traffic better flow out of Fort Monroe after the fireworks display is finished.

"We've done this for OpSail and the Virginia Symphony so this is a continued growing experience for the Fort Monroe Authority and the city of [Hampton](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/hampton-%28hampton-virginia%29-PLGEO100101154030000.topic)," Authority Executive Director [Glenn Oder](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/g.-glenn-oder-PEPLT007430.topic) said. "We're glad to be able to partner with the city on something like this."

The fireworks display is paid for using donations to the Fort Monroe Foundation. The event is open and free to the public.

More information about that performance at the Paradise Ocean Club can be found at http://paradiseoceanclub.com.

<http://hamptonroads.com/2013/06/celebrate-independence-day-fort-monroe>

**Celebrate Independence Day at Fort Monroe**

The Virginian-Pilot  
© June 24, 2013

Fort Monroe in Hampton to host firework display and live music.

Local and military bands will perform as part of the summer concert series at Continental Park, Ingalls and Fenwick roads from 7 to 8 p.m. Free.

Fireworks to begin at 9:30 p.m. Plan to arrive early, bring coolers, lawn chairs and blankets and park in designated areas.

For more information, visit [www.fmauthority.com](http://www.fmauthority.com).

<http://www.dailypress.com/entertainment/dp-fea-july-fourth-roundup-0630-20130630,0,6491482.story>

Fireworks to burst over Peninsula in Fourth of July celebrations

By [Nicole Paitsel](http://bio.tribune.com/nicolepaitsel) and [Sam McDonald](http://bio.tribune.com/sammcdonald)

June 30, 2013

When bursts of sparkling red, white and blue light up a Fourth of July sky, there's nothing that feels more patriotic.

Honoring Independence Day is an easy task in Hampton Roads, where the history of the region stands as a constant reminder of the American Revolution and dozens of special events compete for the honor of celebrating the holiday the best.

When Founding Father [John Adams](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/john-adams-PEPLT000016.topic) wrote to his wife Abigail about the happenings in the Continental Congress, he anticipated that the celebrations of American independence would carry on.

"It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more."

And so it is.

**Newport News**

The annual "Stars in the Sky" event downtown is a particularly good one for families with children, says Renee Popernack, a spokeswoman for the city's parks and recreation department. Free children's rides, like giant slides, bounce houses and obstacle courses will keep the kids busy while they wait for the fireworks show to begin. Also on tap for the evening, the U.S. Air Force Heritage Band of America will perform popular and patriotic music from 7 to 9:30 p.m., when the fireworks display starts.

The fireworks will be shot from a barge in the James River, so seating is never a problem, Popernack says. Families may want to arrive when the event begins at 7 p.m. to get the closest parking space. There is usually a second rush of the crowd around 8:30 p.m.

Admission and parking are free. All City Hall and surrounding parking spaces are opened for the event, except for marked private spaces. The activities will take place at Victory Landing Park, at the end of 23rd Street at the James River. No pets, bicycles, alcohol, skateboards, or radios are permitted in the event area, but families are encouraged to bring their own coolers with food and drink, blankets and lawn chairs. Food vendors will be on site. More information: 926-1400.

**Hampton**

The jubilee long associated with Independence Day is returning to Fort Monroe after a year-long absence from the decommissioned Army post. This year, the Fort Monroe Foundation has scheduled a day of events on July 4 culminating with a 9:30 p.m. fireworks display being lit close to artillery batteries Parrott and Irwin.

Visitors planning to see the fireworks should arrive at Fort Monroe prior to 9 p.m. After that time, police will turn vehicles away to prepare the entrance so spectators can leave the property. A safety zone for boaters will be created around the area where fireworks lit. A section of the eastern boardwalk will also be closed while fireworks are set up. The fireworks display is paid for using donations to the Fort Monroe Foundation. The event is open and free to the public.

The day's events include the U.S. Fleet Forces Band Wind Ensemble performing at 7 p.m. in Continental Park. And the Freedom Support Center is hosting a free event for active duty service members, veterans and their families just north of Outlook Beach. Military identification is required to attend.

At the Paradise Ocean Club, country music artist [Kip Moore](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/entertainment/music/kip-moore-PECLB00000013887.topic) performs at 7 p.m.

More information: <http://paradiseoceanclub.com> and http://fscmilitaryappreciationday.eventbrite.com/.

**Yorktown**

Fireworks will also shoot from a barge in the York River, along the Yorktown waterfront on July 4. The annual event draws crowds from all over the Peninsula, says Dave Meredith, a parks and recreation staff member. He is in charge of the fireworks display this year.

"It should be a good show from anywhere on the waterfront," he says.

To kick off the evening's festivities, the Sounds of the Liberty Bell Ringing Ceremony will start at 7 p.m., followed by music by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Band at 8 p.m. on Riverwalk Landing Stage. At 9:15 p.m., the fireworks show begins.

The parks and recreation department encourages show-goers to arrive as early as 4 p.m. to get a good parking space and close seat. Visitors should be prepared to walk about a mile. Parking attendants will be on hand to help, Meredith says.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/breaking/dp-nws-july-4-fun-hampton-roads-0705-20130704,0,1020757.story>

Fourth festivities thrill visitors

By Amanda Kerr, [akerr@dailypress.com](mailto:akerr@dailypress.com) | 757-247-4733The Virginia Gazette

4:06 p.m. EDT, July 5, 2013

At Colonial Williamsburg a crowd packed Duke of Gloucester Street by the Revolutionary-era Courthouse for a speech by one-time Virginia governor — Patrick Henry. The crowd cheered as Henry, portrayed by Richard Schumann, read the Declaration of Independence.

Members of the McCourt family, who were visiting Williamsburg from Richmond, were inspired by Schumann’s performance.

“It felt like the actual thing,” said Daniel McCourt, a middle school student.  
“I thought he did a great job,” said Daniel’s father, Peter McCourt.

David and Arlene Wright, who annually attend the Grand Illumination at Colonial Williamsburg, made the trek from North Carolina to experience the historic ambience for the Fourth of July.  
David Wright, who was wearing a patriotic-themed shirt with a blue background with white stars, called Schumann’s reading of the Declaration “very inspiring.”

The Wrights planned to spend the rest of the day enjoying various concerts and had already saved a spot near the Governor’s Palace to watch the fireworks Thursday night.

Down in Hampton, Fort Monroe marked a new first in its lengthy history when it welcomed visitors for the Fourth of July as a Virginia-owned facility and national monument instead of an Army base.

The fort hosted a variety of events, including Military Appreciation Day sponsored by the Freedom Support Center for active duty military, veterans and their families. The U.S. Fleet Forces Band Wind Ensemble performed at Continental Park Thursday evening.

And after not hosting fireworks last year during the fort’s transition from the Army to the state, the sky was to be lit up over Irwin and Parrot batteries Thursday night with a patriotic display of pyrotechnics.

Yorktown resident Beatriz Castillo and her daughters, Mercedes and Angelina, were among those who attended Military Appreciation Day. Castillo, whose husband is currently deployed with the Air Force in Afghanistan, said their day had been “awesome,” as she and her family played games, enjoyed free snow cones and played at the fort’s beaches.

“It’s nice to be here,” she said.

Gov. Bob McDonnell attended the Military Appreciation Day event where he spoke to a small crowd of families about the history of the fort and the role Virginia played in the Declaration of Independence.

McDonnell, himself an Army veteran, thanked the veterans and active duty service members for helping to make the United States of America “a remarkable place.”

“The freedom we have as Americans that we celebrate today has only been preserved for these 237 years because of the blood and the sweat and the toil and the sacrifice and the courage and the training and the dedication and the patriotism of American men and woman in uniform,” he said.

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( Ryan M. Kelly / Daily Press / July 4, 2013 )

Spectators watch fireworks erupt over Fort Monroe on Thursday, July 4, 2013.



Gov. Bob McDonnell greets a military family at Military Appreciation Day on July Fourth hosted by the Freedom Support Center at Fort Monroe. The event was part of several activities held at the fort for the Fourth of July. (Amanda Kerr, Daily Press / July 4, 2013)



 Ryan M. Kelly, Daily Press / July 5, 2013 )

Spectators watch fireworks over Fort Monroe on Thursday night.

<http://www.wavy.com/dpp/news/local_news/hampton/fort-monroe-welcomes-back-firework-show>

# Fort Monroe welcomes back firework show

Updated: Thursday, 04 Jul 2013, 11:27 PM EDT  
Published : Thursday, 04 Jul 2013, 11:27 PM EDT

* [Catherine Rogers](mailto:catherine.rogers@wavy.com)

HAMPTON, Va. (WAVY) - A Fourth of July tradition for decades in Hampton was watching fireworks light up the sky above Fort Monroe, but when the Army post was decommissioned last year, the annual show was cancelled.

But on Thursday, the tradition was back, and many spectators arrived early to stake out the perfect spot for the show.

Even Governor McDonnell made the trip to Fort Monroe to introduce the U.S. Fleet Forces Band Wind Ensemble that performed at the Continental Park gazebo at 7 p.m.

Organizers of the fireworks display along with the Fort Monroe Authority said they brought the show back because they knew the historic importance of it.

<http://wtkr.com/2013/07/04/gov-mcdonnell-attends-fourth-at-the-fort/>

# Gov. McDonnell attends “Fourth at the Fort”

Posted on: 10:18 am, July 4, 2013, by [Holly Henry](http://wtkr.com/author/holly-henry/)

Richmond, Va. – Governor Bob McDonnell issued the following statement yesterday on the Independence Day holiday.

“It was a Virginian, Richard Henry Lee, who 237 years ago brought forth a resolution stating ‘Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.’ That resolution led to the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, by Virginia’s second governor, Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration, adopted on July 4, 1776, marks the birth of American freedom, and the timeless principles that continue to govern this great nation: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

“Tomorrow, Americans will continue to celebrate our independence with fireworks, parades and picnics. As we celebrate with our family, friends and neighbors, let us also pause to remember our service members who have gone before us while protecting our great nation. And let us also recognize the brave men and women who continue to protect our freedom and liberty, both at home and around the world, and pray for their safe return. May we never forget, freedom is not free.

“Tomorrow, in recognition of our active, reserve and National Guard service members, their families and all veterans living in Virginia, Maureen and I will be attending the first annual ‘Fourth at the Fort’ open house at the Fort Monroe Freedom Support Center. The Freedom Support Center, a Department of Veteran Services program, developed by Maureen and her tremendous team as part of her Serving Our Service Member Families initiative, provides assistance to military members such as one-stop access to benefits and programs and career planning and guidance, and support for families whose service members are deployed. During this event, we will celebrate those who have given so much to protect this nation, and those who are on the front lines of freedom still today, culminating with music and fireworks at the beach hosted by USAA and the Fort Monroe Foundation. I hope active duty and veteran military and their families in the area will join us for this patriotic event in honor of our men and women in uniform: our American heroes.

“I wish all Virginians a happy and safe Fourth of July.”

# <http://wtkr.com/2013/07/04/thousands-eagerly-await-fireworks-show-at-fort-monroe/>

# Thousands eagerly await fireworks show at Fort Monroe

Posted on: 4:09 pm, July 4, 2013, by [Holly Henry](http://wtkr.com/author/holly-henry/) and [Gabriella Deluca](http://wtkr.com/author/wtkrgabrielladeluca/), updated on: 05:48pm, July 4, 2013

Hampton, Va. – The annual fireworks show is back on at Fort Monroe, after it was cancelled last year.

NewsChannel 3 talked to several people today who were all thrilled to have the fireworks back at such a historic spot.

After last year’s lack of fireworks at Fort Monroe, people are piling in; the Fort Monroe Authority announced the Annual Fourth of July fireworks show is back on.

“This will be our first time seeing it here because they didn’t have it last year, so we are really excited to see it here rather than the other places around here,” says a local resident.

Last year, city officials told NewsChannel 3 the Army cancelled the Independence Day celebration because of a tight budget – but this year it’s back after the Commonwealth of Virginia took ownership of Fort Monroe.

“I think anything we can do to open the Fort and share it with all the people that live on the east coast of Virginia or all over Virginia that want to come and enjoy this beautiful piece of property – that’s what it’s really for.”

The Fort Monroe Authority says they’re expecting thousands.

“The idea that we can put on an event where five to ten thousand citizens in our community can come and celebrate something as great as the 4th of July and do it on a site as historic as Fort Monroe, is really a testimony to the hard work that’s gone into bringing Fort Monroe back to life.”

And they’ve added a Military Appreciation Day to honor anyone who has or is currently serving.

“It just tells me that people really appreciate what we do as individuals and as a group. It makes me feel really excited and happy.”

“I can explain to my kids and say, this is what Daddy does, and this is how they pay us back.”

That Military Appreciation Day is happening right now – with food, games, and more. As for the fireworks, those don’t start until 9:30 p.m. tonight.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, EDITORIALS**

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/dp-nws-edt-letssat-0525-20130524,0,3122608.story>

May 25 Letters: IOW emails, Oklahoma tornado, Fort Monroe security

Subject: [Fort Monroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) Gate Security

We live on Fort Monroe in a former officer's quarters built in the 1930s. We are delighted to have dusk-to-dawn Gate security, as well as daily security patrols. With over 500 acres and an abundance of "dark space" there is very little reason or venue to explore after dark at this stage of the fort's redevelopment. The Paradise Ocean Club is wonderful and is open 11:00 am to 8:00pm.

The historic aspects need to be safe-guarded as much, or more, as the facilities and residents. At this time of year there are 12-14 hours of daylight. Please come often and stay all day! You may fish, bike, hike, run, sun, see the Casemate Museum, and watch a thrilling marine/aviation display daily along the fabulous sea wall.

*Katherine Aldon*

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/dp-nws-oped-corneliussen-0522-20130521,0,7676873.story>

**Fort Monroe self-emancipators' courageous act changed the world**

*9:08 p.m. EDT, May 21, 2013*

In 2012, [**Fort Monroe**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic)'s official May 24 history celebration arrived the way the undersized, counterproductively divided Fort Monroe National Monument had arrived: notably late and wrongly defined.

Officials were celebrating Fort Monroe events from 1861 that University of Richmond president Edward Ayers once called "the greatest moment in American history."

It's easy to argue that that moment set into motion the long-delayed completion of America's founding. And it's vital to recognize that it began not on May 24 thanks to a white Union general, but on May 23 thanks to brave, self-emancipating escapees from slavery.

That moment illustrates why the split national monument should be unified, with its sense of place cherished. It should be laid out for grand public purposes rather than hacked in two for petty private ones.

In 2011, after six years of bipartisan stalling on securing a substantial national park from [**Congress**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/government/u.s.-congress-ORGOV0000131.topic), Virginia's overdevelopment-obsessed leaders engineered creation of the split national monument by presidential order.

Notably late, wrongly defined.

An irony is that full national stewardship on Fort Monroe's bay side, along with revenue generation on the bridge-tunnel side, would bring not only historical, recreational and environmental enrichment, but public financial enrichment too.

Fort Monroe's value "will be degraded," the [**Norfolk**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/norfolk-county/norfolk-%28norfolk-virginia%29-PLGEO100101185020000.topic) Virginian-Pilot's editors warn, unless "roughly 100 acres of state-owned waterfront land dividing" it are "added to the park." (Please see the illustration at FortMonroeNationalPark.org.)

May 23, 1861, makes all of this especially important.

Decades earlier, victory at Yorktown had made independence real, but not the principles of the Declaration of Independence. For millions of enslaved Americans, the new nation scorned self-evident truths about equality, rights and freedom.

At Gettysburg four score and seven years after the Declaration, [**President Lincoln**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/politics/government/presidents-of-the-united-states/abraham-lincoln-PEHST002241.topic) invoked those truths, proclaiming a "new birth of freedom." Risk-taking enslaved Americans had contributed mightily to that new birth when they decided to seek sanctuary at Fort Monroe.

That active decision by Frank Baker, Sheppard Mallory and James Townsend pressed the Union general to make his shrewd, constructive but merely reactive May 24 "contraband decision." Noting these humans' status as so-called "property," he confiscated them.

Though self-emancipators were still mistreated, their movement cascaded throughout the South, shifting the balance of war power and pressing history toward the Emancipation Proclamation.

Ugly political reality had forced the general to decide under slavery's filthy laws, but the self-emancipators decided under the laws of Nature and Nature's God. Yet it's generally assumed that the reactive decision matters more than the active one. That's why officials celebrated May 24.

But it was those self-emancipators who, acting decisively, affirmed the natural but long-ignored truths. As Thomas Jefferson had predicted, nothing was more certain than that enslaved people would be free.

Fort Monroe, the Union's bastion in Confederate Virginia, powerfully symbolized that certainty. It could do the same in the future, if politicians would save, not squander, its sense of place.

America was the planet's first nation founded on ideas. When self-emancipators challenged America to begin living up to those ideas, the country's founding finally began moving toward completion.

That permanently beautiful truth could animate creation of Virginia's Historic Diamond. The present Historic Triangle—[**Jamestown**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/jamestown-county/jamestown-%28jamestown-virginia%29-PLGEO100101163010000.topic), Williamsburg, Yorktown—tells only a partial story of America's founding. Fort Monroe could anchor a Historic Diamond telling the complete story.

So on a planet where freedom never goes unchallenged, what began on May 23, 1861, makes Fort Monroe a candidate for a Freedom's Fortress National Park and for designation as a World Heritage Site.

But because that would require vision, the only remaining hope is unlikely, though not completely impossible: national shaming of Virginia's crony-kowtowing leaders.

Reporters pay attention to Virginia's 2013 elections, to Big Money in politics, to the Civil War sesquicentennial and to coastal development folly. Want to help? Contact national-level journalists.

*Steve Corneliussen*

*(FortMonroeNationalPark.org,* [***SaveFortMonroe@gmail.com***](mailto:SaveFortMonroe@gmail.com)*)*

*first wrote about Fort Monroe on these pages in September 2005.*

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/dp-nws-edt-letssat-0608-20130607,0,4564404.story>

June 8 Letters: Fort Monroe beach, Virginia GOP, Smithfield sale

**Policing the beach**

Upon trying to visit Dog Beach on [Fort Monroe](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) Sunday June 2, my vehicle and I were stopped at the entrance by a city employee in a police-like uniform who turned me back, announcing that the beach was closed because (she said) "People are sneaking in from the other side."

Of course this begs the question, "How do you stop people from 'sneaking' around the chain link fence that extends into the water on both sides of the isthmus, from here?" — leaving alone at least one larger question: "Why stop them?"

*James P. Dougherty*

*Hampton*

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/dp-edt-notables0628-editorial-20130627,0,279410.story>

**Editorials: Open Door Award, Smithfield Foods, Fort Monroe fireworks**

**A weekly roundup of short opinions offered by the Daily Press Editorial Board**

**Fourth at the Fort**

This week's announcement that Fourth of July fireworks will return to [**Fort Monroe**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) made us happy, and not just because it has always been such a great setting in which to celebrate our nation's independence.

The cancellation of the traditional fireworks celebration last year was hard to take, because it felt like the historic fort — decommissioned in 2011 – was being rendered irrelevant. We never want to see that happen. The return of fireworks this year, then, should serve as a reminder of the vibrant potential Fort Monroe still holds with its current designation as a national monument.

We look forward to Fourth at the Fort next week, and we hope it portends many more decades of fireworks over this local historical treasure.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/opinion/dp-nws-edt-letsfri-0628-20130627,0,6797226.story>

**June 28 Letters: Fort monroe, Ken Cuccinelli**

*5:23 p.m. EDT, June 27, 2013*

[**Fort Monroe**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/us/virginia/hampton-county/fort-monroe-PLGEO100101154020000.topic) **adventure**

We recently had the pleasure of attending the Travis Tritt concert at the Paradise Ocean Club at Fort Monroe. What a great venue — and so beautiful on the beach under the [**super moon**](http://www.dailypress.com/topic/science-technology/science/astronomy/supermoon-EVSAT00003.topic).

As regular members, our family and friends never fail to enjoy the clean pool and beach and the great times around the tiki bar. The staff is well-trained and very attentive. This is a top rate place for anyone that wants to sit back, relax on the water with a cool breeze.

*Linda and David Seely*