

Programmatically Achieving Excellence in Historic Preservation Stewardship

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FEMA's National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland is responsible for training emergency managers and first responders to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters. The NETC campus is also a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the site of the former St. Joseph's College, founded in 1809 by Mother Elizabeth Seton, the first American born woman beatified by the Roman Catholic Church.

In 2013, with the encouragement and support of FEMA Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (OEHP), NETC executed a programmatic agreement with the Maryland State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and other consulting parties to integrate FEMA's historic preservation compliance responsibilities outlined in Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) into the day-to-day management of the NETC facility. Based in part on FEMA's Prototype Agreement, the document provides a framework for expediting historic preservation compliance and the flexibility to address specific preservation issues and concerns.

The beneficial use of "programmatic allowances" as stipulated by the agreement allows NETC to proceed with routine repairs and maintenance without consulting with the SHPO. Proof of the agreement as an invaluable tool is evidenced by NETC's accomplishments over the past year. Under the leadership of facilities manager Valerie Benson, NETC has processed 4,517 work orders and 5,348 preventative maintenance and routine work requests while utilizing the agreement. Every undertaking was accomplished while avoiding any adverse effects to the any of the twenty-one historic buildings and structures within the historic district.

While this data is impressive, the exceptionalism lies in the fact that the NETC facilities team are meeting their historic preservation stewardship responsibilities while simultaneously integrating facets of economic and environmental sustainability. The efficiency incorporated within the projects at NETC has not gone unnoticed. The facility was awarded the DHS 2014 Sustainable Practices award in the Building Future Category and nine buildings are designated as High Performance Sustainable Buildings utilizing the United States Green Building Code (USGBC) rating system. NETC is eagerly exploring additional efficiencies. Several buildings are slated for repair and maintenance in the coming years, the creation of a formal appearance plan is being considered, and a pilot program investigating the incorporation of solar energy solutions is underway.

Currently, NETC and the National Park Service Historic Preservation Training Center (NPS HPTC) have embarked on preservation maintenance of the circa 1910 historic log cabin structure, best known for being the site of student and instructor social gatherings after completion of NETC training. Located next to Tom's Creek on the eastern edge of the historic campus, the cabin has sustained considerable damage as a result of water infiltration and subsequent material deterioration over the course of time. The NPS HPTC is conducting repairs to the masonry, chimney, windows and doors, daubing and chinking, porch, stairs, and log walls in accordance with the stipulations of the agreement, including the programmatic allowances.

Once completed in the fall of 2015, the repair work will mitigate safety hazards while preserving character defining features and returning the historic building into daily service for NETC use. Keeping environmental compliance at the forefront, NETC also completed the eight-step floodplain review process in coordination with OEHP to ensure compliance with Executive Order 11988 floodplain management requirements. OEHP looks forward to continued support of NETC as it considers the future while successfully preserving the past.