

## Rebuilding Fort King

### Central questions:

**Can Fort King be rebuilt? Yes**

**Which fort will be rebuilt, the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> fort?** I would recommend the 1<sup>st</sup> fort as it is simpler construction, it would incur fewer landscape changes and park modifications, and it is more representative of the early Florida frontier forts and many expeditious forts erected during the early stages of the Second Seminole War.

**What would it cost to build an entire replica fort or a portion of the fort?** The costs would have to include some additional archaeology, site contextual landscaping and tree clearing work, site prepping followed by capping with clean fill, and fort construction and materials costs. The project may have to build in additional costs for site security. A 1<sup>st</sup> fort replica would be a less expensive project from the standpoint of site prep and construction time and materials. Smaller, the 1<sup>st</sup> fort would be less imposing than the 2<sup>nd</sup>, but nonetheless, it would provide the necessary context for interpretation. The types of costs for building a replica fort are noted in the limitations section below.

**What are the benefits?** The benefits have been discussed in board meetings, but primarily...

1. The presence of a rebuilt fort would be the magnet for attracting public visitation (tourists and the local public) and serve as a primary eco-history attraction for Ocala and Marion County;
2. It is safe to say that rebuilding either the first or second fort would likely appeal to the larger public. Purists would find it offensive and never perfect representation of the past.
3. If fund-raising or revenue generation is a driving force, then more revenue will be generated from the larger public than the historic purists.
4. There are examples of rebuilt pioneer homes within the County and within Central Florida, but no rebuilt forts of the period and rebuilding Fort King will provide the public with a point of military and historical reference not otherwise accessible within a large geographical area.
5. The fort could serve as the gateway for interpreting the Seminole Wars in the areas of material culture, historical archives and library, and living and static museum services.

**What are the limitations?** The limitations are stipulated below

1. Rebuilding the fort will foreclose on federal assistance for either funding additional archaeological investigations or site development costs. The NPS-DOI does not support rebuilding projects;
2. Florida does provide historic preservation funding for building rehab and restoration projects, but they will not fund building replica sites, there are too many authentic sites that need funding; and
3. Costs. The cost of rebuilding the fort would include:
  - a. additional archaeological work;
  - b. removal of the trees and landscaping for a minimum of 300 feet around the building site; a rebuilt fort will look out of place if the site is not prepped for a contextual presentation;
  - c. site preparation work for the fort site as well as the surrounding landscape involving the placement of sufficient fill to permit the placement of palisade structure without intruding into the archaeological deposits (see below);
  - d. fort construction and material costs

4. The park and site are located within a residential area and the rebuilt fort will literally dominate a cleared local landscape. As noted above a rebuilt fort will look out of place if the site is not prepped for a contextual presentation and that will require the removal of a lot of trees and changes to the slope and elevation with concomitant correction of local drainage issues. This somewhat denuded environmental context will have little appeal to the local residential population. It may be necessary to employ creative landscaping to shield the residences on Fort King Avenue from the historic landscape and the rebuilt fort.

5. The rebuilt fort will be constructed of pine and it will need to be aggressively maintained and portions replaced during its functional life. A construction variance may be required as the structures may have to be built to a modern code and not in their (somewhat expeditious) original standard to accommodate visitation.

6. The rebuilt fort will literally loom over the McCall house. The McCall house is currently the dominant landscape feature and it will break up the historic landscape effect.

**What are the options that might mitigate the impact of the benefits and limitations?** Nothing is impossible in the end, but obviously funding is essential. Fund-raising outside of Federal and State sources will likely be the key as government will not support the construction of a historical replica fort. In addition, I can see some public relations work will be necessary to fit the rebuilt fort and associated landscape changes into the existing neighborhood with as little conflict as possible. Further, the FKHA will need to work with local government with respect to the forts construction, materials, and methods, as well as the landscape changes resulting in the loss of a lot of trees to provide the presentation context. At some point the park will need a museum/interpretive building and the McCall house can serve that purpose on the short term. However, when the fort is rebuilt the house and the winding driveway will literally be obtrusive.

**What is the process for building a replica fort?** The process would be based on historical and archaeological research. The process would be conducted in stages linked to move from the research, to site preparation, and then to actual construction. The exigencies of modern construction would require the use of larger dimension timbers as they must remain stable due to constant public use and abuse. The replica can be built on the exact location as long as the original site is capped and sealed, or as is usually done, on a prepared area adjacent to but off the actual site to further reduce any potential for harming the original archaeological fabric. The latter is the cheaper option and in the best interests of the preservation of archaeological context. The latter is essential as that is why the fort made it to the NHL level of recognition. What is challenging at the Fort King site is the reduction of the original construction platform at the top of the hill overlooking the spring and run. At Fort King, the area immediately east of the fort and north of the monument would suffice if it is capped with a minimum of three feet of clean fill soil. The total area has not been determined yet as some associated structures may need to be included in the replication process. I have attached **Figure 1** showing how to erect a stable palisade line within fill soil placed on top of the archaeological deposits that will not affect the integrity of the deposits.

Palisade  
profile view

Palisade  
plan view

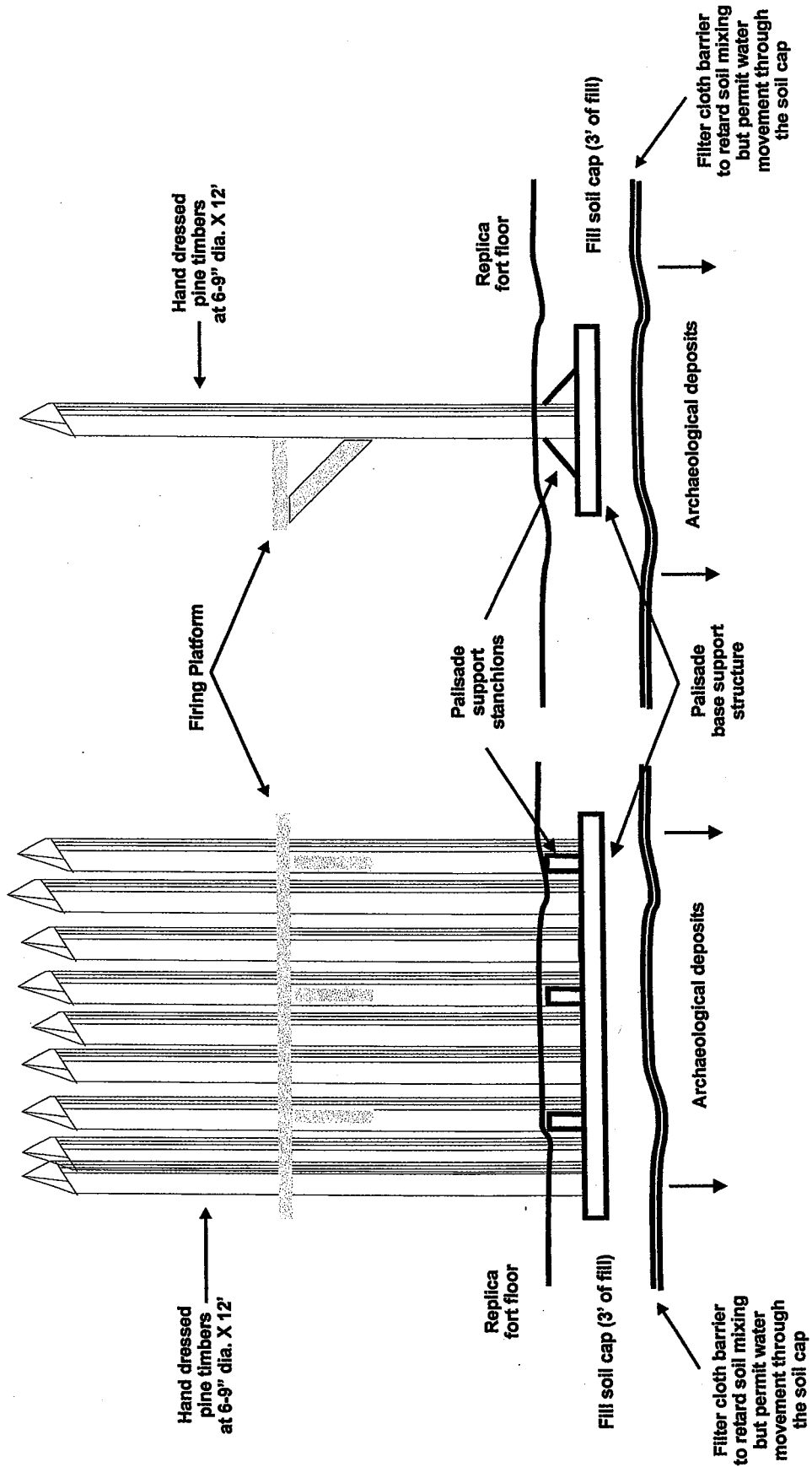


Figure 1. Conceptual fort palisade construction using a base support structure placed in a fill soil cap above archaeological deposits.