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Contact: Mayci Rechner
Public Information Officer
Mayci.rechner@patriotspoint.org

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Ex-USS Clamagore Submarine to be Dismantled and Recycled

Plan approved by the state of South Carolina and PPDA Board

MOUNT PLEASANT, S.C. – The Patriots Point Development Authority (PPDA) Board unanimously voted today to begin the process of dismantling and recycling the ex-USS Clamagore (SS-343) submarine.

The submarine closed to the public in December 2021 due to safety concerns caused by a leak in a main ballast tank. However, the submarine has needed significant repairs for more than a decade due to extensive corrosion on the vessel.

“In addition to the Clamagore’s buoyancy challenges, there are also increased environmental risks the longer the submarine remains at Patriots Point,” said Executive Director Dr. Rorie Cartier. “Polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, are present throughout much of the vessel and exceed levels allowed by the EPA. There are also more than 500 lead batteries, weighing nearly one-and-a-half tons each, that need to be removed. Leaving this submarine in the Charleston Harbor could cause serious environmental problems with the landfall of a major hurricane.”

Patriots Point has thoroughly examined multiple options for the Clamagore’s future, including a full repair and restoration. According to a 2019 assessment from Joseph Lombardi, one of the industry’s leading experts in historic ship restoration, it would cost upwards of \$9 million.

“The board reviewed and debated multiple plans for the future of the submarine for the past decade,” said Executive Director Dr. Rorie Cartier. “Unfortunately, we cannot financially sustain the maintenance of three historic vessels. The USS Yorktown and USS Laffey also need repair, and we are fighting a never-ending battle against the corrosion that comes from being submerged in saltwater. We will honor the Clamagore with a premier exhibit aboard the Yorktown and preserve her story.”

Patriots Point’s curatorial staff is currently working to harvest artifacts from the Clamagore to feature in that exhibit. Some preserved artifacts will include gauges, sonar equipment, torpedo hatches, and the periscope. Patriots Point is also contacting other institutions that may be interested in displaying Clamagore artifacts.



Recycling the Clamagore is expected to cost about \$2 million. Funding will come from Patriots Point's operating budget. During the project, the submarine will be dismantled and parts will be sold to be reused or recycled. The vast majority of the steel will be used to make new products, lowering the demand for mined iron ore and reducing energy costs in the steelmaking process.

Preparing the submarine to be recycled is a months-long process. The next step for PPDA is hiring a qualified vendor to dismantle the submarine. Before the Clamagore leaves its current dock, Patriots Point will host a public farewell ceremony.

About the Clamagore

The Clamagore was commissioned on June 28, 1945, too late to serve in World War II. From 1945-1947, the boat operated in the Caribbean as a member of the 132 unit Balao class of submarines. The vessel was modernized into a Guppy II configuration in 1947 and operated in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Mediterranean until 1962. In late 1962, the Clamagore underwent a final conversion into a Guppy III configuration.

The Clamagore is most known for its service off the coast of Key West, Florida where it earned the nickname "Gray Ghost of the Florida Coast." The submarine was decommissioned in 1975. It opened as a museum at Patriots Point in November, 1981.

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About Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, on the Charleston Harbor, is the #1 attraction in Mount Pleasant, S.C., and is home to a fleet of National Historic Landmark ships, and the only Vietnam Support Base Camp in the U.S. Patriots Point is also headquarters to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society and the agency's official Medal of Honor Museum. Visit www.patriotspoint.org for more details, or find us at @patriots_point on Twitter and Instagram, and Facebook at www.facebook.com/PatriotsPoint.org.

About the USS Yorktown Foundation

The USS Yorktown Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to raising funds to provide scholarships for educational programs at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, as well as supporting new exhibits, symposiums and special programs. The Foundation's mission is "to cultivate a unique learning environment that connects generations by celebrating America's history and its heroes, inspiring freedom, patriotism, leadership and service." For more information, please visit www.USSYorktownFoundation.org or call 843.881.5925.