

[MEMORIALS]

'MAN IN SEA' MONUMENT HONORS DIVERS

After years of dreaming, surveying, working with the Navy and securing support from businesses and other organizations, a group that wants to build a monument to U.S. military divers has a green light to move forward.

The Man in the Sea Memorial Monument is planned for the grounds of the Washington Navy Yard, the former site of the Navy Diving Training School. The idea's been talked about since the 1970s, but when the Homeland Security Policy Institute Group (HSPIG) set up an online forum for military divers in 2003, the concept of a diving memorial finally began to take shape.

Ex-Army diver and Sons of The American Legion member Jeff West joined the HSPIG project a few months later, and volunteered to solicit support and future donations from organizations, corporations and individuals – including actor Tom Hanks, who generously covered some of the cost of surveying the monument site. Meanwhile, former Navy submariner and bronze artist Jim Harrison Smith donated thousands of hours to create a small-scale representation of what the monument will look like.

In June, the Navy granted HSPIG permission to begin fundraising. A memorial committee has settled on a design for the monument: a 10- to 11-foot standing bronze sculpture of a figure in an MKV diving helmet and suit – aka JAKE, the rig used by hard-hat divers – near the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and other Navy historical sites. Plans also call for a movable bridge, water wall, stairs and benches. Sustainable design strategies include the use of recycled aluminum for canopy structures, and the planting of native grasses and perennials. The cost is estimated at approximately \$10 million.

Thomas Barnes, co-founder of HSPIG, is a life member of the Legion. Other Legionnaires serve on the organization's advisory board. Explorer and environmentalist Jean-Michel Cousteau, and former VA Secretary Anthony Principi and his wife, Elizabeth – herself a Vietnam War veteran who served in the Judge Advocate General Corps – are among those lending their support to the Man in the Sea monument. A date for groundbreaking has not been set.

– Laura Edwards

Learn more about the project:

 www.hspig.org

Artist Jim Harrison Smith sculpted a monument prototype. Photo courtesy Jeff West

