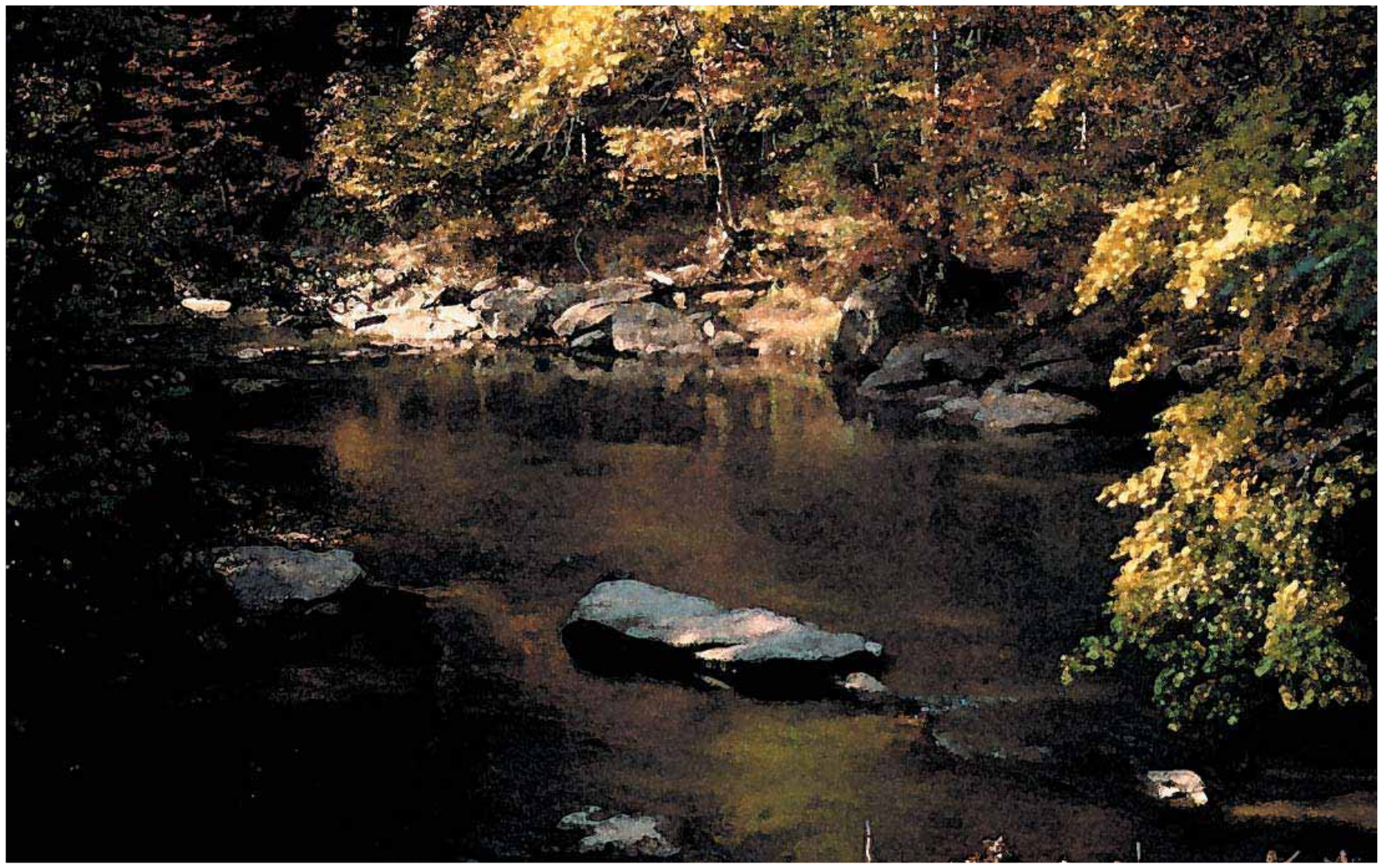




Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway



How to Comment on the Plan:

Comments on the *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement, Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway* are welcome and will be accepted for 60 days following publication of notification in the *Federal Register*. You can submit your comments by mail or electronically.

Send written comments to:

National Park Service, Rock Creek Park
Superintendent
3545 Williamsburg Lane NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-1207

You may comment by e-mail by sending comments to: rocr_superintendent@nps.gov

Complete, electronic versions of the *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement, Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway* and its 26-page summary can be reviewed and downloaded as PDF-format files from links at the National Park Service's Rock Creek Park Internet site at:

<http://www.nps.gov/rocr/pphtml/documents.html>

There also is a link at this location through which you can provide comments electronically.

Regardless of how you comment, please include your name and street address with your message. Please submit electronic comments as a text file, avoiding the use of special characters or any form of encryption.

It is National Park Service practice to make comments, including names and addresses of respondents, available for public review. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.



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Purpose of and Need for Action

Introduction

Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway are popular units of the national park system that are heavily used by the public. This use places demands on park personnel and facilities to protect resources and maintain a suitable visitor experience. Use and associated demands are expected to increase in the future. A coordinated, integrated plan is required by the National Park Service (NPS) to guide park management in a direction that best meets the multiple demands being placed on the area.

Some of the future visitor experience, natural resource, and cultural resource conditions of the park and parkway are specified in law and policy. Others must be determined through planning. The alternatives in the final general management plan address the resource and experience conditions that are not mandated by law and policy.

Scoping demonstrated that there is much that the public likes about the park. One of the most common comments during scoping was that the park is fine just the way it is today. In particular, people want the traditional character of the park to continue, although many also expressed concern about the effects of traffic on the recreational experience. Another concern is that continued use of some of the park's historic resources as administration offices may compromise their historic integrity.

The central issue for general management planning in Rock Creek Park is how to meet the often conflicting purposes of protecting the scenic, natural, and cultural resources of the park, while concurrently providing for appropriate public use of these resources. This issue is complicated by the location of Rock Creek Park within a major metropolitan area. As a result of its location, the park has many users, some of whom hold widely varying opinions about its optimal use.

The final general management plan will be the basic document for managing Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The purposes of the general management plan are to:

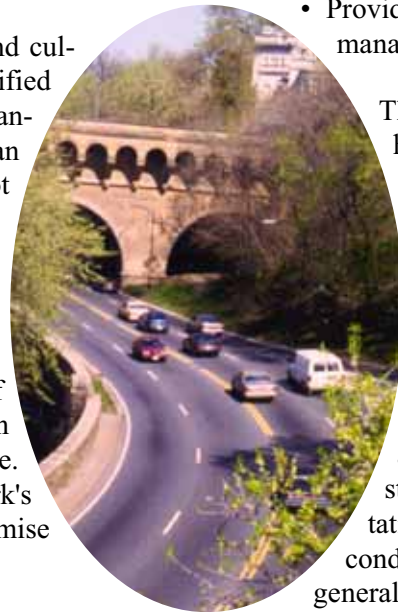
- Specify resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway; and
- Provide the basic foundation for decision-making regarding the management of the park and parkway.

The final general management plan will be the first comprehensive plan prepared for Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway by the National Park Service. The plan will represent an agreement by the National Park Service with the public on how the park and parkway will be used and managed.

The general management plan does not propose specific actions or describe how particular programs or projects should be ranked or implemented. Those decisions will be addressed during the more detailed planning associated with strategic plans, annual performance plans, and implementation plans. All of those plans will derive from the goals, future conditions, and appropriate types of activities established in the general management plan. As part of that decision-making process, project-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents with opportunities for public review and comment, if appropriate to the project, would be prepared prior to the implementation of any actions included in the general management plan.

Area Covered by the Plan

As shown in the Region map, Rock Creek Park is located in the northern portion of Washington, D.C. It consists primarily of an undeveloped, wooded



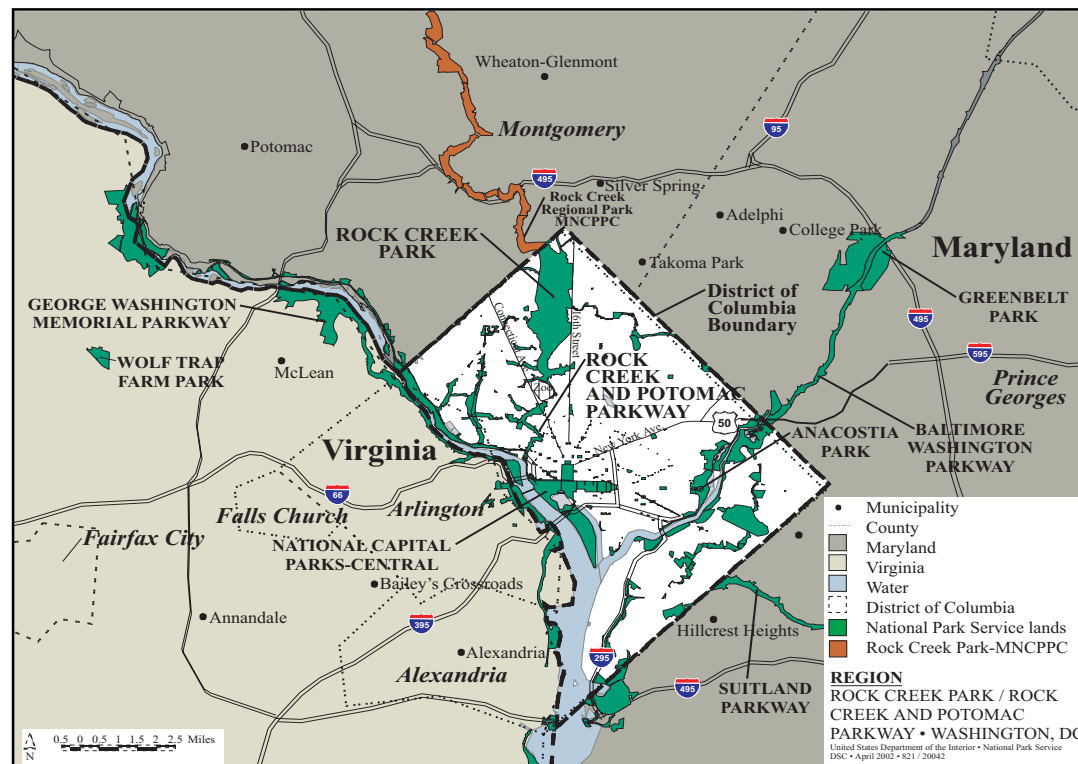
valley, with some associated tributaries and uplands. The major landscape feature is Rock Creek, a perennial stream that flows along the length of the park before joining the Potomac River south of the park. The park is completely surrounded by the heavily urbanized metropolitan Washington, D.C. area.

The area covered by the general management plan includes the lands administered by the National Park Service in the Rock Creek valley from the Maryland state line south to the National Zoo, the 2-mile-long Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway from the National Zoo to Virginia Avenue, and lands along selected tributaries of Rock Creek.

Park and Parkway Purposes

The 1890 legislation that established Rock Creek Park states that the area is to be "perpetually dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States." It specifies that the park is to "provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible." This legislation forms the basis for planning and management of park resources. Rock Creek Park is linked to the Potomac River and the monumental core of Washington, D.C. by the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, which was established by Congress in 1913.

The general management plan includes purpose statements for the park and parkway that were developed based on these units' legislative mandates and on NPS policies. The purpose statements are the most fundamental criteria against which the appropriateness of all recommendations, operational decisions, and actions for the park and parkway are to be tested.



Rock Creek Park exists to:

- Preserve and perpetuate for this and future generations the ecological resources of the Rock Creek valley within the park in as natural a condition as possible, the archeological and historic resources in the park, and the scenic beauty of the park.
- Provide opportunities for the public to experience, understand, and appreciate the park in a manner appropriate to the preservation of its natural and cultural resources.
- Provide opportunities for recreation appropriate to the park's natural and cultural resources.

The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway exists to:

- Connect Rock Creek Park and the National Zoological Park (National Zoo) to Potomac Park with a scenic road.
- Prevent pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek.

The general management plan also includes several significance statements that help define the park's importance to the nation's natural and cultural heritage. Their purpose is to help managers to make decisions that preserve the resources and values necessary to the park's purposes. The following significance statements recognize the important features of the park and parkway.

- Rock Creek Park is one of the oldest and largest naturally managed urban parks in the United States.

- The park and parkway contains approximately 2,100 acres of valuable plant and wildlife habitat, providing protection for a variety of native species within a heavily urbanized area.



- Rock Creek Park encompasses a rugged stream valley of exceptional scenic beauty with forested, natural landscapes and intimate natural details, in contrast to the surrounding cityscape of Washington, D.C.



- Rock Creek Park's forests and open spaces help define the character of the nation's capital.



- Rock Creek valley was important in the early history of the region and in the development of the nation's capital, and the park's cultural resource are among the few tangible remains of the area's past.

- Rock Creek Park is an oasis for urban dwellers, offering respite from the bustle of the city.



- The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway is the first federally constructed parkway and one of the best examples of early parkway design.

- The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway provides a scenic gateway to the city's monumental core.



- Rock Creek Park is a historic designed landscape incorporating early 20th century picturesque and rustic features designed to enhance the visitors' experience of the naturalistic park scenery.



- Located in the heart of a densely populated cosmopolitan area, Rock Creek Park serves as an ambassador for the national park idea, providing outstanding opportunities for education, interpretation, and recreation to foster stewardship of natural and cultural resources.



Servicewide Mandates and Policies

As with all NPS units, management of the park and parkway is guided by numerous congressional acts and executive orders, in addition to the establishing legislation. Some of these laws and executive orders are applicable primarily to units of the national park system. Others have broad application, such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and executive orders addressing the protection of wetlands and floodplains.

The alternatives considered in the general management plan all incorporate and comply with the provisions of these mandates and policies. In addition to the approaches specified in the final general management plan, the National Park Service will strive to implement all of the servicewide mandates and policies in the park and parkway. As a result, the general management plan does not state, for instance, that the National Park Service will

continue to protect endangered species, control invasive plants and animals, improve water quality, protect archeological sites, preserve historic structures, and provide access for citizens with disabilities.

The Organic Act created the National Park Service in 1916. This act defines the NPS' mission to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life [in national parks, monuments, and reservations] and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Thus, any management actions in Rock Creek Park must recognize that preserving scenery and the natural and cultural resources of the park is paramount, and that any visitor activities associated with enjoyment can occur only to the extent that they do not impair the scenery and the natural and cultural resources for future generations.

Most of the Rock Creek watershed is outside of the park. Therefore, a key activity will involve continued coordination with other agencies throughout the region to improve conditions in Rock Creek and its tributaries. This will include such continuing actions as supporting the Chesapeake Bay Program; working with the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority to eliminate discharges of untreated sewage to the creek, either from pipe breaks or from overflow during storm events from combined sanitary and storm sewer systems; and working with upstream agencies and property owners to reduce volumes of storm water runoff.

Current Use

It is estimated that Rock Creek Park supports more than 2 million recreational visits per year. Most visitors are residents of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

- Developed facilities include the Rock Creek Nature Center and Planetarium, the Peirce Mill complex, the 4,000-seat Carter Barron Amphitheater, two nine-hole golf courses, picnic areas, community gardens, horseback riding facilities, and sport fields.

- Biking, jogging, walking, and in-line skating are popular activities on the park's roads and paved trails, particularly on weekends when several road segments are closed to motorized vehicles. Driving for pleasure also occurs, particularly along the length of Beach Drive.



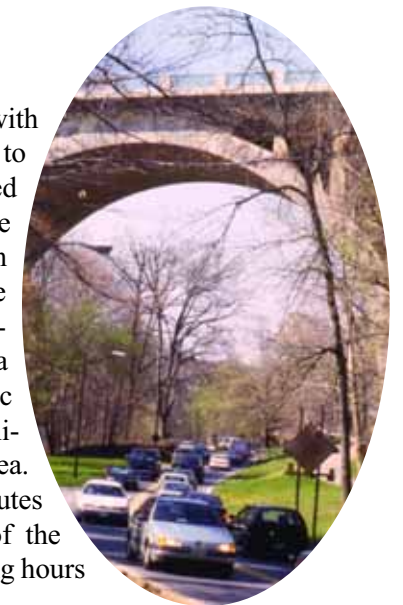
- The forests on the valley slopes and ridge tops are used for hiking and provide opportunities for solitude and nature study.



In addition, the park experiences more than 9 million nonrecreational visits annually. These visits primarily involve the use of park roads to travel between destinations outside the park without stopping in the park.

Current Traffic Management

Park roads were established to comply with the establishing legislation's instructions to "lay out and prepare roadways . . . to be used for driving." Together, Beach Drive and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, which run alongside Rock Creek from the Maryland state line to Virginia Avenue, provide a north-south route that has become a popular commuting road. Weekday traffic on Beach Drive averages about 6,600 vehicles per day through the scenic gorge area. Several park roads provide east-west routes across the park. More than 95 percent of the vehicles entering the park during commuting hours pass through without stopping.



Approximately 55,000 vehicles per day typically use the busiest portion of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The National Park Service manages traffic on weekdays by making the parkway one-way inbound into the city

during the morning rush-hour and one-way outbound from the city during the afternoon rush-hour.

Current management practices include closing portions of Beach Drive and other park roads to motorized vehicles on weekends and holidays. These closures provide recreation opportunities that are unmatched elsewhere in the District of Columbia and are very popular with park visitors. Therefore, all of the alternatives for future management of the park will continue the practice of weekend and holiday road closures.

Decision Points

Decision points are major resource condition and visitor experience issues that need to be addressed in the general management plan. Decision points were identified by the general public, park staff, and other agencies during scoping for the general management plan.

A pivotal management issue to be resolved by the plan involves the use of park roads. This issue includes determining the level of nonrecreational traffic in Rock Creek Park and the degree to which park values would be affected by such use. Two other key management issues include the currently limited ability to provide orientation, interpretation, and education services to visitors in the park, and the problems that park administrative and operations activities encounter at their present locations in historic structures.

These key management issues are summarized in three questions, called decision points. The decision points helped define the management alternatives that are described and evaluated in the general management plan. The decision points ask:

- How should traffic be managed in Rock Creek Park and on the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway?
- What are the most appropriate levels of service and locations for visitor interpretation and education in the park?
- What are the most appropriate locations to support administration and operations functions with respect to minimizing resource disturbance?

Items not Covered in the General Management Plan

The general management plan does not include the Rock Creek Tennis Stadium and adjoining playing fields. Management direction for this area was established in 1995 in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Tennis Stadium, Rock Creek Park*.

The general management plan does not address concerns identified during scoping that are already prescribed by law, regulation, or policy, or that would be in violation of such requirements. It also does not address issues that are at an operational or developmental level of detail. Such issues are most appropriately associated with the park's 5-year strategic plan or annual implementation plans. Those plans will be based on the resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved in the park and parkway that are established in the final general management plan.

During scoping and in comments on the draft general management plan, the National Park Service received many suggestions for park and parkway management that were not incorporated into any of the alternatives. Many of these suggestions are more appropriate for the shorter-term management documents that will tier from this final general management plan, and will be included in 5-year strategic plans, annual performance plans, and implementation plans. Descriptions of the types of suggestions and the reasons they were not incorporated into any of the alternatives are included in the general management plan in the section entitled "Alternatives or Actions Eliminated from Further Study."

Public Participation

The National Park Service considers the public a key participant in planning for Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. Therefore, public involvement has been an important component of the planning process. The "Consultation and Coordination" section of the general management plan and environmental impact statement describes public participation to date. As described in the "Next Steps" section of this summary, the National Park Service will continue to partner with the public to develop and implement the plan for managing the park and parkway.



Alternatives

Management Prescriptions

Four alternatives were developed to provide different approaches for addressing the decision points. To design the alternatives, the National Park Service first conducted public scoping, and then screened a large number of actions and alternatives, refining them based on public input. Following the general definition of the alternatives, the National Park Service identified management prescriptions that could implement the alternatives.

The 12 management prescriptions identified as potentially applicable to Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway are summarized in Table 1. Consistent with the high level of concern expressed by the public about the use of roadways, seven of the prescriptions apply to roads. The others emphasize desired conditions and visitor experiences for forests, cultural resources, recreation areas, visitor facilities, and administration and operations areas.

The management prescriptions identify how various parts of the park and parkway would be managed. Each prescription is based on desired visitor experiences and resource conditions, and the kinds of activities or facilities within the prescription that would achieve the targeted conditions.

Formulation of Alternatives

The four alternatives embody the range of what the public and the National Park Service want to see accomplished with regard to visitor experience, natural resource conditions, and cultural resource conditions. They are based on outcomes, or actual conditions on the ground, as expressed by the management prescriptions.

The configurations for future park conditions and management within each alternative were developed by placing the management prescriptions described in Table 1 on the map. Each alternative is a combination of several management prescriptions. None of the alternatives contains all of the management prescriptions. Instead, each consists only of those prescriptions that achieve the goals for the park under that alternative.

In some cases, all four alternatives apply the same management prescription to the same area. For example, Fort DeRussy and the Godey Lime Kilns are within the Cultural Resource Zone in all four alternatives. This occurs because this appears to be the most appropriate way to manage these facilities, regardless of the alternative selected for the park.

The concepts associated with each alternative are described below. Table 2 provides more details on the features of each alternative.

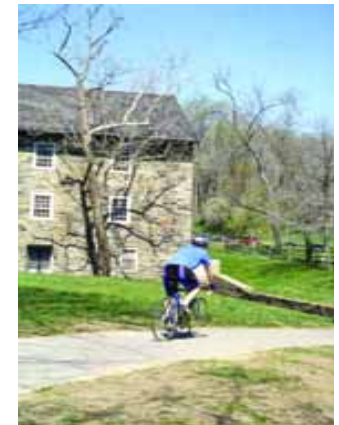


Table 1: Summary of Management Prescriptions

Management Prescription	Description	Visitor Experience and Resource Condition	Appropriate Activities and Facilities
Forest Zone	Natural landscape of forests on the valley slopes and ridge tops.	Provides opportunities for exploration and contemplation of the forest. Encounter frequency with other visitors is low to moderate. Natural processes are mostly undisrupted.	Activities include hiking, birding and other nature study. Facilities are mostly undeveloped, other than trails.
Cultural Resource Zone	Contains the key cultural resources related to the significance and purposes of the park.	Provides a sense of history. Encounter frequency with other visitors and park personnel is high. The integrity and ambiance of cultural features are protected, documented, and interpreted. Natural resources are managed compatibly with cultural resource.	Activities and facilities are compatible with cultural resource protection. Activities include education and interpretation, adaptive uses. Facilities include cultural resources, which could be adaptively used.
Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone	Roadways and mowed areas along the Rock Creek and Piney Branch valley floors. Provides scenic views of the creek and forested valley.	Provides motorized and nonmotorized access to the valley and informal recreational areas. Encounter frequency with other visitors is moderate to very high. Heavy urban traffic occurs on weekdays during rush hours. On weekends and holidays, motorized traffic is excluded in three sections and nonmotorized recreation occurs. The landscape is largely forested, but shoulders and grassy bays are maintained by mowing.	Activities include motorized and nonmotorized touring, nonrecreational traffic through or across the valley, and informal recreation such as picnicking, birding and other nature study, canoeing and kayaking; bicycling; and hiking. Facilities include rustic picnic areas, paved trails, roadways, and traffic control devices.
Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone	Similar to Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone but with reduced traffic volumes and speeds.	Same as Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone.	Same as Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone.
Valley Floor Nonmotorized Recreation Zone	Excludes motorized traffic. Includes Beach Drive and adjacent mowed areas. Provides scenic views of the creek and forested valley.	Provides a relaxed and unhurried experience where visitors enjoy natural sights, sounds, and smells, uninterrupted by motor vehicle traffic. Encounter frequency with other visitors is moderate to very high. Landscape is largely forested, but shoulders and grassy bays are maintained by mowing.	Activities include nonmotorized recreation such as walking, bicycling, in-line skating, birding and other nature study, canoeing and kayaking, and picnicking. Facilities include paved trails or former road bed, rustic picnic areas, and interpretive waysides.
Valley Floor Mid-Weekday Recreation Zone	Excludes motorized traffic on weekdays between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. At all other times, is similar to the Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone.	During mid-weekday closures, same as the Valley Floor Nonmotorized Recreation Zone. At all other times, same as the Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone.	Same as Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone.

Table 1: Summary of Management Prescriptions (Continued)

Management Prescription	Description	Visitor Experience and Resource Condition	Appropriate Activities and Facilities
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Zone	Highly developed parkway that provides a scenic driving experience. Mix of grassy fields and woodlands with limited city views.	Aesthetically pleasing landscape provides a sense of decompression and relaxation. Encounter frequency with other visitors is high to very high. Heavy traffic is accepted. Natural and historic features are maintained, including parkway design.	Activities include motorized and nonmotorized recreation such as driving, walking, bicycling, canoeing and kayaking, and in-line skating. Facilities include roadways and paved trails.
Park Road Zone	Park roads, including associated shoulders, pullouts, parking areas, paved trails, historic bridges, and scenic viewpoints.	Provides motorized and nonmotorized park access. Encounter frequency with other visitors is high to very high. Visitors can have an unhurried drive or bicycle ride, despite heavy urban traffic at times. The surrounding landscape is forested, but shoulders are maintained by mowing.	Activities include motorized and nonmotorized travel, nonrecreational traffic across the park. Facilities include roadways, paved trails, and traffic control devices.
Visitor Facility Zone	Developed zone defined by facilities for information, interpretation, education, and other visitor services.	Visitors receive an introduction to park's natural and cultural history, and can obtain information on recreation opportunities. Encounter frequency with other visitors and park personnel is high. Substantial maintenance and intervention are required to accommodate concentrated visitor use.	Activities include information, interpretation, education, and other visitor services. Facilities include buildings and waysides to support information and interpretive activities; historic structures could be adaptively used.
Urban Recreation Zone	Developed recreation facilities such as picnic areas, community gardens, stables, sport fields, and golf course. Background setting is rustic and park-like.	Provides developed facilities for recreation. High levels of intervention and maintenance are required to support concentrated visitor use. Encounter frequency with other visitors is very high.	Activities include gardening, picnicking, tennis, performances, golf, horseback riding, and informal sports. Facilities include developed recreation features and structures.
Administration/Operations Zone	Includes structures and grounds used for park administration and operations.	Most visitors are unaware of this zone or its facilities. However, when necessary, visitors are able to locate facilities easily and find them user friendly. Best management practices protect resources, prevent pollution, and reduce noise and visual impacts.	Activities include park administration and operation, birding and other nature study. Facilities include offices and maintenance yards; historic structures could be adaptively used.
Urban Transit Zone	Includes non-NPS roads within the park and parkway boundaries that provide access across the park and connections with the urban street grid.	Visitors experience the sights and sounds of urban traffic. Encounter frequency with other visitors is very high.	Activities: urban transportation; where possible, links the park to local trails for nonmotorized recreation. Facilities: roadways and traffic control devices.

Table 2: Summary of Key Features of the Alternatives

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
<u>Traffic Management</u>				
Beach Drive	Include in the Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone. Continue weekend closures of sections of this road. Allow automobile travel along the length of Beach Drive on weekdays, but at reduced speeds.	Include in the Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone. Continue weekend closures of sections of this road. Allow automobile travel along the length of Beach Drive on weekdays using current management techniques.	Include northern portions in the Valley Floor Nonmotorized Recreation Zone. Permanently close this zone to motorized vehicles and manage for non-motorized recreation. Include the remainder in the Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone. Allow automobile travel, but encourage slower speeds and fewer nonrecreational vehicles.	Include northern portions in the Valley Floor Mid-Weekday Recreation Zone. Between rush-hours on weekdays, close this zone to motorized vehicles and manage for nonmotorized recreation. Except during mid-weekday closures, allow automobile travel along the length of Beach Drive on weekdays, but encourage slower speeds. Continue weekend closures of sections of this road.
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway	Continue rush-hour lane reversals. Upgrade the paved recreational trail. Improve the intersection of the parkway with Beach Drive near Connecticut Avenue.	Continue current traffic management policies. Provide maintenance as needed.	End lane reversals and allow two-way traffic at all times. Implement high-occupancy vehicle restrictions in the primary direction of travel during rush-hours. Upgrade the paved recreational trail. Improve the intersection of the parkway with Beach Drive near Connecticut Avenue.	Same as Alternative A.
Other park roads	Rehabilitate or construct paved recreational trails adjacent to roads.	Continue current management practices.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Paved recreation trails	Upgrade about 10 miles of trails and construct up to 1.75 miles of new trails.	Maintain trails and provide rehabilitation of deteriorated trail segments.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<u>Interpretation and Education</u>				
Peirce Mill complex	Include in the Cultural Resource Zone. Rehabilitate the mill to focus on history of milling and land use in the Rock Creek area. Rehabilitate the landscape of the complex to retain the historic character.	Include in the Visitor Facility Zone. Rehabilitate the mill to focus on history of milling and land use in the Rock Creek area.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.

Table 2: Summary of Key Features of the Alternatives (Continued)

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
Peirce-Klingler Mansion and the Linnaean Hill building complex	Include in the Cultural Resource Zone. Rehabilitate the buildings for adaptive use compatible with park resource values.	Include in the Administration/Operations Zone. Continue to use for park administrative offices.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Lodge House	Move the U.S. Park Police District 3 substation out of the structure. Include in the Visitor Facility Zone. Convert to a visitor contact station to provide park orientation, information, and interpretation.	Include in the Administration/Operations Zone. Continue to use for U.S. Park Police District 3 substation.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Rock Creek Nature Center and Planetarium	Rehabilitate the nature center and expand to improve effectiveness of public programs. Upgrade the planetarium.	Maintain current configuration.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<u>Administration and Operations</u>				
Administrative offices	Move out of the Peirce-Klingler Mansion. Relocate to commercial office space outside the park, or to new or remodeled space constructed in the park, such as at the maintenance yard.	Continue to use current space in the Peirce-Klingler Mansion.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
U.S. Park Police D-3 substation	Move out of the Lodge House. Relocate preferentially to commercial space outside the park, or to a new space constructed in the park, such as at the H-3 area.	Continue to use current space in the Lodge House.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
H-3 area	Construct a new park police substation only if selected by a siting study conducted if suitable commercial space cannot be obtained outside of the park.	Continue current uses.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Maintenance yard	Rehabilitate the area. Construct new office facilities only if selected by a siting study conducted if suitable commercial space cannot be obtained outside of the park.	Continue current uses. Relocate some administrative staff to existing facilities at this site.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<u>Approximate Cost</u>				
Capital costs (one time)	\$14,837,000	\$2,130,000	\$14,897,000	\$14,897,000
Operating cost	\$8,244,000 per year	\$7,364,000 per year	\$8,244,000 per year	\$8,277,000 per year

Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses and the NPS' Preferred Alternative

Alternative A is the NPS' preferred alternative. It would improve visitor safety, better control traffic volumes and speeds through the park, enhance interpretation and education opportunities, and improve the use of park resources, especially cultural resources. It generally would retain the current scope of visitor uses. Details of this alternative are provided in Table 2 and the Alternative A map.

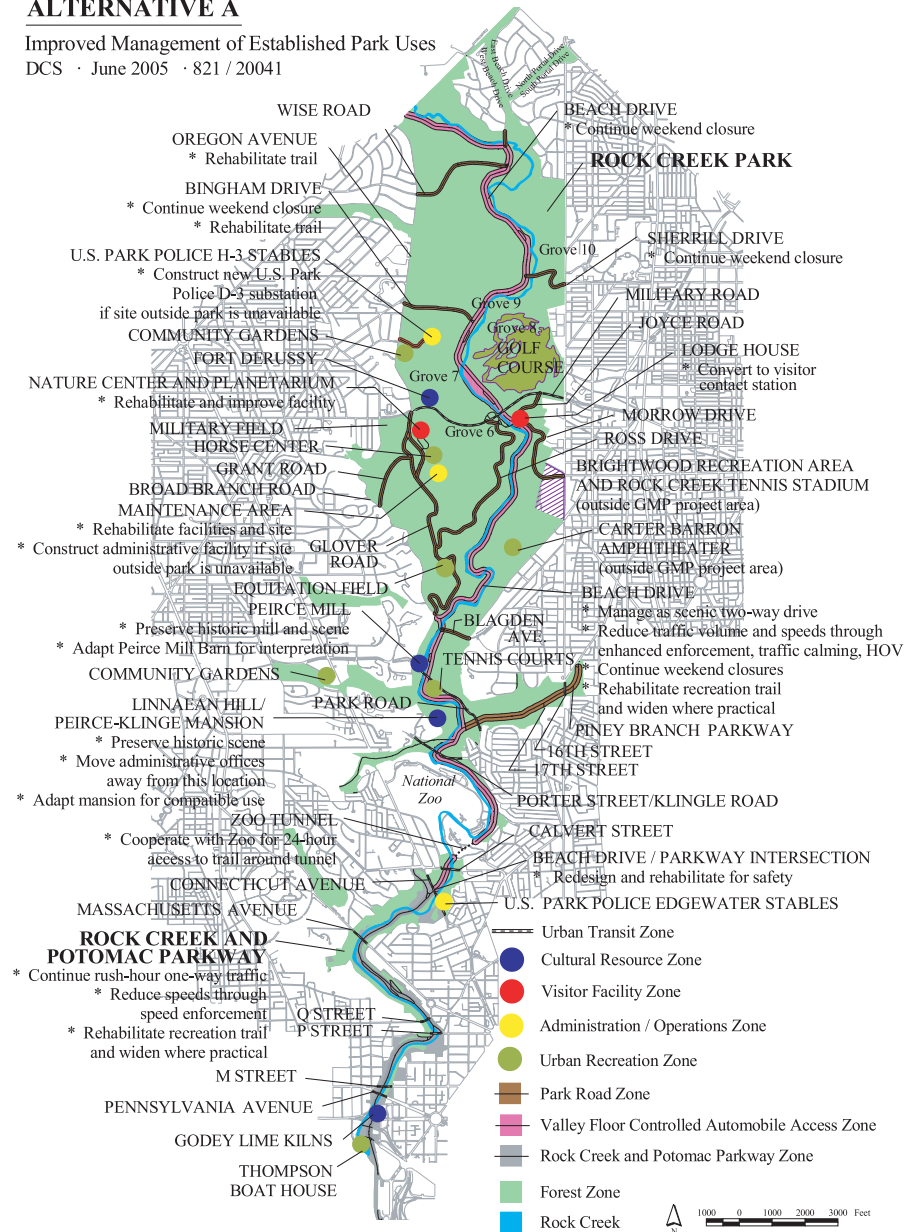
Alternative A would improve traffic management within the park and parkway. The existing park roadway system would be retained and nonrecreational through-traffic would be accommodated. However, to improve visitor safety and the quality of the visitor's experience, traffic speeds and volumes would be reduced compared to those that would occur if current management were continued (Alternative B). Alternative A also would:

- Upgrade trails and rehabilitate deteriorating segments.
- Rehabilitate the Peirce Mill complex to focus on the history of milling and land use in the area. This would expand on the already completed rehabilitation of the Peirce Mill Barn.
- Move the park administrative offices out of the Peirce-Klingel Mansion at Linnaean Hill to commercial office space outside the park, or to a new office facility that would be constructed at an already disturbed area within the park, such as at the maintenance yard.
- Rehabilitate the Linnaean Hill complex for adaptive use compatible with park values.
- Move the U.S. Park Police substation out of the Lodge House on Beach Drive at Joyce Road to commercial space outside the park, or to a new park police substation that would be constructed within an already disturbed area in the park, such as near the existing U.S. Park Police H-3 stables.
- Convert the Lodge House to a visitor contact station to provide park orientation, information, and interpretation.
- Rehabilitate and expand the nature center and upgrade the planetarium to improve effectiveness of public programs.

ALTERNATIVE A

Improved Management of Established Park Uses

DCS · June 2005 · 821 / 20041



Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action

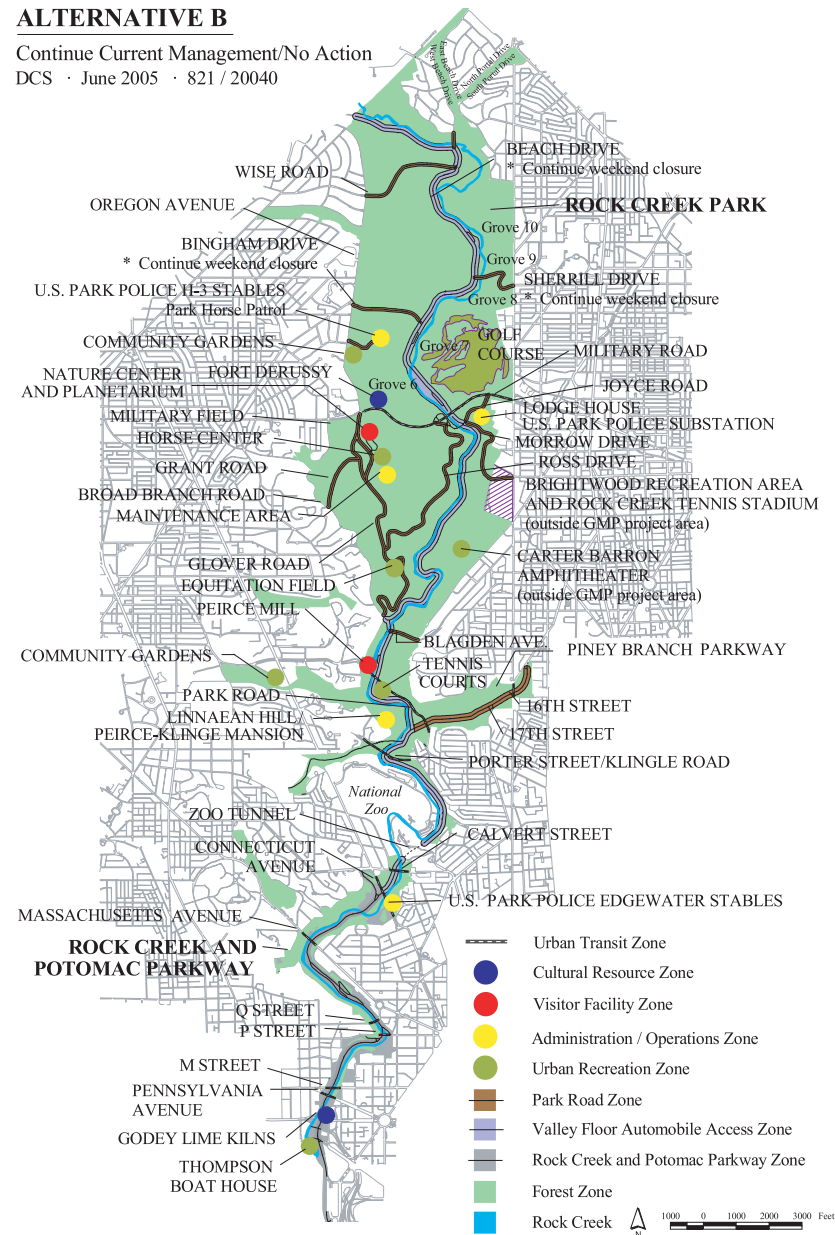
Alternative B would continue the current management pattern into the future. It represents the “no action alternative” required by implementation guidelines for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Key features of this alternative are included in Table 2 and the Alternative B map.

Under Alternative B, Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway would be maintained as they have evolved thus far. There would not be any major changes in resources management, visitor programs, or facilities beyond regular maintenance. The current park road system would be retained and existing traffic management would continue.



ALTERNATIVE B

Continue Current Management/No Action
DCS · June 2005 · 821 / 20040



Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis

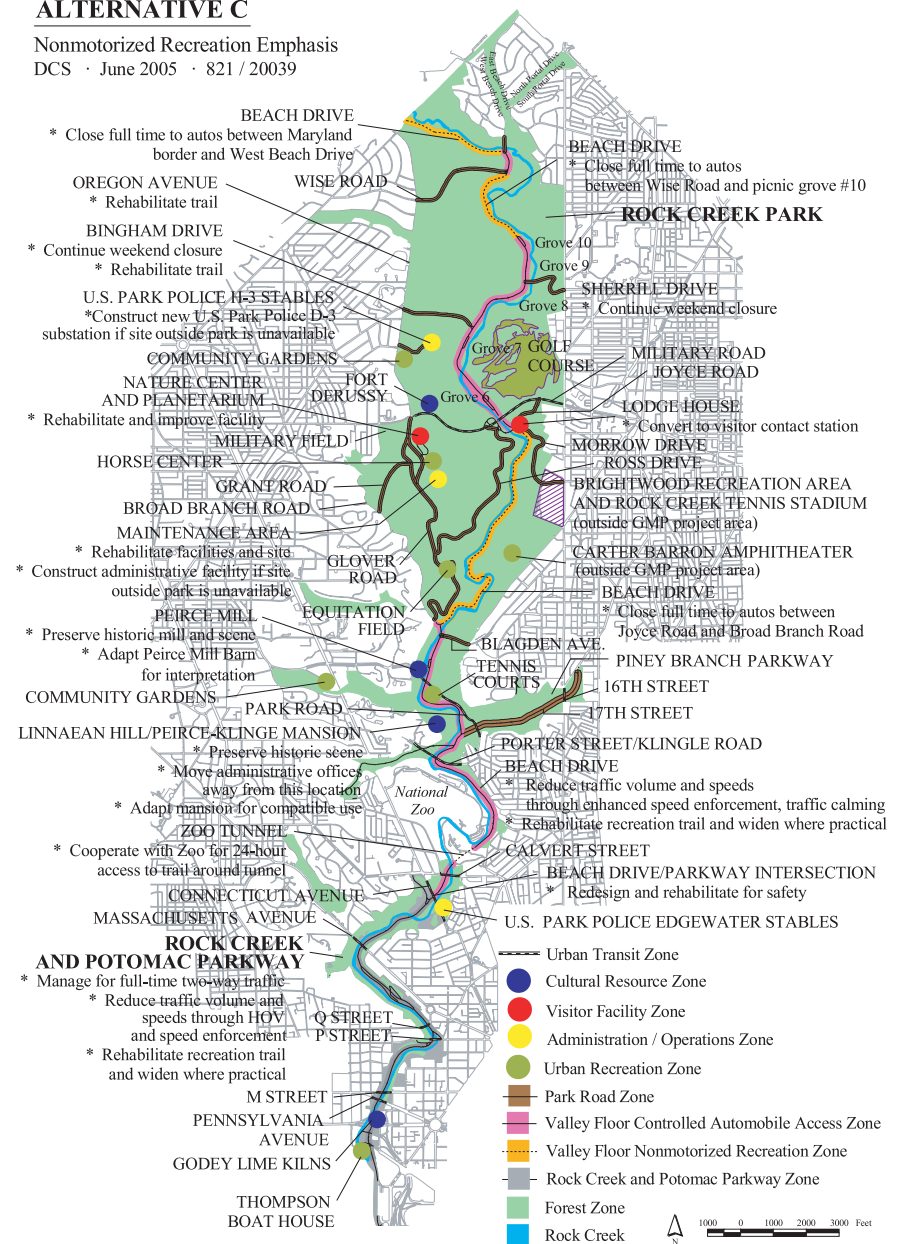
Alternative C would promote nonmotorized recreation throughout the week. This alternative would eliminate traffic in much of the park north of Broad Branch Road by closing three sections of Beach Drive to automobiles. These would be the same three segments that currently are closed on weekends and holidays. It also would implement traffic-reducing and traffic-calming measures on roads in the southern portion of the park and on the parkway. As shown in Table 2, the Alternative C management proposals for resources other than traffic would be the same as those listed for Alternative A.

The intent of closing the road along portions of the Rock Creek valley floor would be to manage this area as a quiet refuge from urban automobile traffic and to promote nonmotorized recreation throughout the week. This section of the park would become a destination, rather than a through drive, for nonmotorized activities, in keeping with the park's natural and historic character. Alternative C would convert the road into a paved trail available throughout the week with little interference from automobile traffic through the Rock Creek valley and connecting to the Potomac River, as envisioned in regional bicycle plans.



ALTERNATIVE C

Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis
DCS · June 2005 · 821 / 20039



Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement

Alternative D was developed in response to a letter sent to the National Park Service by the Mayor of the District of Columbia. The mayor suggested "implementing weekday vehicular traffic restrictions on sections of upper Beach Drive in non-rush hour periods." The goals stated in the letter would include "reducing automobile traffic in the most sensitive portions of Rock Creek Park, while minimizing any impact on surrounding neighborhoods and commuters."

On weekdays, Alternative D would close three segments of Beach Drive in the northern portion of the park to motorized vehicles for a 6-hour period, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. These would be the same segments that currently are closed on weekends and holidays. For the other 18 hours of each weekday, including both rush-hour periods, traffic management would be similar to Alternative B, although traffic-calming measures like those in Alternative A would be used to reduce speeds. As shown in Table 2, Alternative D would manage resources other than traffic in the same manner as Alternative A.

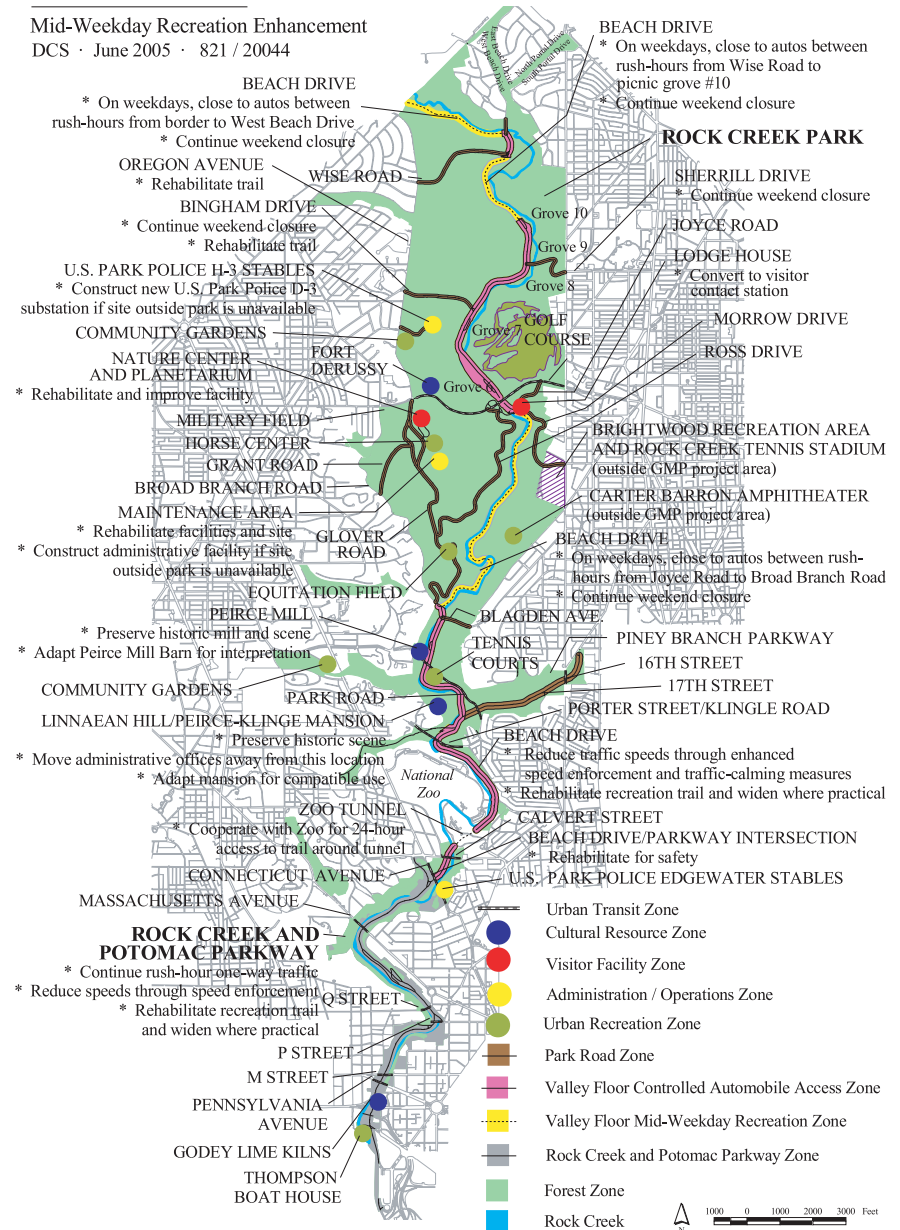
Alternative D was intended as a compromise between traffic and nonmotorized recreation. During rush-hour periods, the alternative would attempt to facilitate traffic flows and minimize the diversion of rush-hour traffic from the park into nearby neighborhoods. Between rush-hour periods on weekdays, it would promote nonmotorized recreation and provide a quiet refuge from the surrounding urban area.

Alternative D would not change cross-park traffic patterns, but would provide a nonmotorized setting for recreation through much of the northern portion of the park during the middle part of workdays. It would also maintain driving along the length of Beach Drive as an allowed activity during rush-hours and such popular times as summer evenings.



ALTERNATIVE D

Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
DCS · June 2005 · 821 / 20044



Differences among the Alternatives

In all areas, Alternative B, the no action alternative, would continue current management practices. Differences of the other three alternatives with current management practices are high-lighted below.

- Alternative A would continue weekday auto travel throughout the park, but would implement traffic-calming and speed enforcement measures to reduce traffic speeds and volumes. This alternative could include actions to encourage some drivers to voluntarily use Ross Drive or roads outside the park instead of Beach Drive, such as decreasing the speed limit on Beach Drive from the current 25 miles per hour.
- Alternative C would permanently close selected segments of Beach Drive north of Broad Branch Road to automobiles and would promote nonmotorized recreation in this area. Other park roads would be managed to encourage slower vehicle speeds and reduce the number of nonrecreational vehicles.
- On the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Alternative C would end lane reversals and allow two-way traffic at all times. This alternative would implement high-occupancy vehicle restrictions during rush-hours in the primary travel direction of the traffic.
- During the middle part of each weekday, Alternative D would close portions of Beach Drive north of Broad Branch Road to motorized vehicles. It would continue automobile travel throughout the park at all other times on weekdays. Traffic-calming measures and improved enforcement would reduce traffic speeds and volumes.
- Recreation trails would be upgraded under Alternatives A, C, and D.
- Alternatives A, C, and D would increase the use of park historic resources for interpretive and educational purposes. This would include continued rehabilitation of the Peirce Mill complex to support visitor programming. These alternatives also would move the park administrative offices out of the Peirce-Klingel Mansion at the Linnaean Hill building complex and provide adaptive use of the

buildings.

- Alternatives A, C, and D would improve park introduction and information services by such measures as converting the Lodge House to a visitor contact station and upgrading the nature center and planetarium.
- Alternatives A, C, and D would address the problems of insufficient space within historic buildings for park administration offices and the District 3 U.S. Park Police substation by moving these functions to other locations. For both functions, the preferred approach would be to use commercial space outside the park. If commercial space could not be secured, these functions would be relocated to sites within the park, such as the maintenance yard and/or H-3 area, only after completing a siting study. These alternatives also would improve the use of the park maintenance area. All of these actions would be designed and implemented to protect wildlife habitat.



Affected Environment

The National Park Service uses the term "impact topics" to refer to the resources and values of concern in the planning process. Impact topics are used to focus the planning process and the assessment of potential consequences of the alternatives. The National Park Service identified impact topics for the *Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement, Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway* based on their recognition as resources or values that are:

- Cited in the establishing legislation for the park or the parkway;
- Critical to maintaining the significance and character of the park;
- Recognized as important by laws or regulations; or
- Of concern to the public during scoping for the general management plan.

Table 3 shows the criteria that helped establish each impact topic as appropriate for consideration in the general management plan and environmental impact statement.

The "Affected Environment" section of the general management plan and environmental impact statement characterizes the existing conditions for each of these impact topics. The intent was not to provide complete information on all aspects of these impact topics in the park. Instead, the "Affected Environment" section focused on those aspects of each impact topic that could be affected by the alternatives.

One of the primary concerns in the park and along the parkway is traffic. In 2003, traffic congestion in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area was identified as the third- worst in the nation. During the morning and evening commuting periods, traffic levels on arterial roadways in the vicinity of the park and parkway typically meet or exceed their capacities. These conditions also occur within the park and parkway, where several intersections routinely fail or function poorly in accommodating traffic volumes during the commuting periods.

Impact Topic	Cited in Establishing Legislation	Critical to Park Significance and Character	Recognized by Laws or Regulations	Cited During Scoping
Air quality			✓	✓
Rock Creek and its tributaries	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wetlands and floodplains			✓	✓
Deciduous forests	✓	✓	✓	✓
Protected and rare species			✓	✓
Other native wildlife	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cultural resources, including archeological resources, historic structures, and cultural landscapes		✓	✓	✓
Traditional park character and visitor experience	✓	✓		✓
Public health and safety			✓	✓
Local and regional transportation				✓
Community character				✓

Environmental Consequences

The environmental impact statement portion of the general management plan describes the effects of each alternative on each impact topic. The analysis involved the following steps.

- Identifying the regulations and policies that were applicable to each impact topic.
- Describing the methods that were used to conduct the analysis. This included defining thresholds for terms such as "minor" or "major" effects for the impact topic and establishing timeframes for long-term and short-term effects. For resources that are protected under the Organic Act's mandate to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life," this included establishing a criterion that defined impairment.
- Performing the analysis for the park and parkway, and in a more regional context to determine cumulative impacts. The analyses involved comparing conditions that would occur with changes in management (Alternatives A, C, and D, commonly called the "action alternatives") to conditions that would occur if current management practices continued (Alternative B, the "no action alternative").

The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 4. Complete information on effects is provided in the general management plan / environmental impact statement.

The analysis of environmental consequences found that all four alternatives would have fairly similar effects on air quality, the water quality and hydrology of Rock Creek and its tributaries, wetlands and floodplains, deciduous forests, and protected and rare species. These findings would be expected, based both on the NPS' mandate to protect these resources and the development of the alternatives from decision points that focus on traffic management, visitor interpretation and education, and effective administration and operations.

Some differences in effects on natural resources would occur. However, except for roadkill reductions, none of the differences in effects on natural resources among the alternatives would be major.

In the area of traditional park character and visitor experience, the improved education and interpretation facilities included in Alternatives A, C, and D would provide greater opportunities for the public to learn about and experience the park's natural and cultural resources, compared to Alternative B. The action alternatives would also enhance the efficiency of park administration and improve police services.

The greatest benefits to nonmotorized recreation would be associated with Alternative C, which would eliminate most of the automobile traffic in the park north of Broad Branch Road and would provide a broad, smooth surface in a quiet setting for activities such as walking and bicycling. However, Alternative C would eliminate the current visitor experience of automobile travel along the length of the park, including the gorge area, which would be a major adverse effect on the current visitor experience.

Historic park roads are considered a cultural resource. By closing them to motorized traffic, Alternative C would modify some of the design features that define their significance.

Cultural resources would be the only impact topic where one or more of the alternatives could cause irreversible and irretrievable losses of resources. Under the three action alternatives, the disturbance of sites in association with new construction could result in some irreversible and irretrievable loss of archeological or historic resources.

The traffic management measures of all three action alternatives would produce major improvements in visitor safety. Most of the improvements would be associated with the implementation of engineered traffic-calming devices, which would reduce vehicle speeds and the associated frequency and severity of accidents.



Level of service ratings are used by traffic engineers to measure and compare traffic conditions. The impact topics addressing regional and local transportation and community characteristics are affected by traffic levels. For Alternatives A, C, and D, the effects on these impact topics were determined by comparing the levels of service they would produce in the year 2020 with the levels of service that would occur in the year 2020 from the implementation of Alternative B.

- Alternative A and Alternative D would produce 2020 conditions similar (no differences in levels of service) to those in Alternative B. This result was expected, because Alternative A would affect traffic primarily outside the rush-hour periods and Alternative D was designed to minimize effects on rush-hour traffic.
- For Alternative C, improvements in levels of service within the park would be noticeable to major. Effects would include the elimination of automobile traffic on most of Beach Drive north of Broad Branch Road.
- Noticeable (change of one level of service) improvements in traffic would occur along most of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway with Alternative C.
- With Alternative C, eight road segments outside the park would have the benefits to traffic and community character of improved levels of service, while nine road segments would have decreased levels of service with associated adverse effects on traffic and community character. There would not be a disproportionate routing of traffic to disadvantaged areas or ethnic neighborhoods.

During the middle part of workdays, Alternatives C and D would have similar effects, diverting traffic that would use park roads under Alternative B onto nearby city streets. However, nearby streets and intersections would be operating well below their capacities during the mid-day period, even in the year 2020. While the diverted mid-day traffic would be perceptible on some city streets, it would not cause any changes in levels of service or in traffic-related community character.

With regard to the first decision point, Alternatives A, C, and D would reduce traffic speeds and volumes in the park compared to Alternative B.

- Alternative A would accomplish this by improving enforcement and implementing traffic-calming measures while maintaining the roads for automobile travel throughout weekdays.
- Alternative C would permanently eliminate automobile travel on some segments of Beach Drive and would implement traffic-reducing and traffic-calming measures in other areas.
- Alternative D would implement traffic-calming measures, and would close sections of Beach Drive to motorized traffic during the middle part of each weekday.

Regarding the second decision point, the levels of service for visitor interpretation and education would be equally improved under the identical measures of Alternatives A, C, and D. This would be accomplished by moving administrative and operations functions out of historic buildings and by rehabilitating these and other historic and educational structures. For the third decision point, Alternatives A, C, and D would provide the same level of improvements compared to Alternative B by moving administration and operations functions into modern facilities.



Cumulative Effects

For many of the impact topics, the action alternatives would produce beneficial effects on the natural and cultural resources of the park and parkway. However, on a regional basis, these alternatives would have only small incremental benefits, and would be overshadowed by the adverse effects resulting from continued population growth and development in the watershed. In addition, regardless of the management actions taken by the National Park Service, traffic in the region will continue to increase.

As a result, it will be important for the National Park Service to continue to participate in regional actions, such as the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge mitigation, which includes reestablishing migratory fish in upper Rock Creek. In addition, the improved education programs that would be implemented under the action alternatives could provide some of the most important beneficial effects by improving public awareness of environmental concerns and encouraging improved stewardship by citizens of resources outside the park and parkway.



Preferred Alternative and Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative A is the NPS' preferred alternative. This is the alternative that the National Park Service believes would best accomplish its goals for managing Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. Alternative A was selected as the NPS' preferred alternative based on its ability to effectively balance the recreational, environmental, and traffic considerations for the short- and long-term future of the park.

The environmentally preferred alternative would best promote the national environmental policy expressed in the National Environmental Policy Act. This alternative would cause the least damage to the biological and physical environment, and best protect, preserve, and enhance historical, cultural, and natural resources.

The National Environmental Policy Act identifies six criteria be used to help determine the environmentally preferred alternative. Based on these criteria, Alternative D would be environmentally preferred by a close margin compared to the other action alternatives. Alternative B, which would continue current management, would not achieve the criteria as completely as the action alternatives.



Table 4: Summary of Impacts of the Alternatives

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
Air quality	Little effect on air quality because traffic patterns would not change from Alternative B and traffic would remain in the airshed. Carbon monoxide levels would be below National Ambient Air Quality Standard. The airshed's ozone status would not be affected. Best management practices would ensure that effects from construction would be negligible. No impairment of air quality resources.	Carbon monoxide levels would increase compared to current conditions because of traffic increases. However, carbon monoxide levels would remain well below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard. No impairment of air quality resources.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A. Although Alternative C would reroute traffic that would use Beach Drive under Alternative A or B, no traffic would be diverted to outside the airshed.	Effects would be same as Alternative A. Although Alternative D would reroute traffic that would use Beach Drive during the mid-day period under Alternative A or B, no traffic would be diverted to outside the airshed.
Rock Creek and its tributaries	Application of best management practices to park areas known to be contributing pollutants would produce beneficial, long-term, measurable effects on water quality. Construction at several sites would produce negligible, adverse, short-term effects on water quality and hydrology. Better education of the public could help reduce upstream pollutant loadings and storm water flows. Replacement of poorly designed trail segments with erosion problems would have a measurable, long-term, beneficial effect on water quality. Improved park-wide management of soils, vegetation, and water under an updated natural resources management plan would have a measurable, long-term, beneficial effect on water quality and hydrology. Continued inter-agency measures to maintain and improve sanitary and combined sewer systems would produce beneficial, long-term, major effects on water quality. Coordination could also produce beneficial, long-term, major reductions in streambed alterations such as scour and sedimentation. No impairment of water quality or hydrology resources.	The application of best management practices to park areas known to be contributing pollutants would produce beneficial, long-term, measurable effects on water quality. Continued inter-agency measures to maintain and improve sanitary and combined sewer systems would produce beneficial, long-term, major effects on water quality. Coordination could also produce beneficial, long-term, major reductions in streambed alterations such as scour and sedimentation. No impairment of water quality or hydrology resources.	Diversion of traffic to roads outside the park would redistribute car-related pollutants that wash into Rock Creek during storms but the change in pollutant loading in the watershed would be negligible. Other effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Diversion of traffic to roads outside the park during mid-day periods would redistribute car-related pollutants that wash into Rock Creek during storms but the change in pollutant loading in the watershed would be negligible. Other effects would be the same as Alternative A.

Table 4: Summary of Impacts of the Alternatives (Continued)

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
Wetlands and floodplains	No temporary or permanent adverse effects would occur on wetlands. Better education of the public on the need to control upstream storm water runoff could benefit wetlands. Minor, temporary, adverse effects on floodplains would result from rehabilitation at the Peirce Mill complex and construction of improvements on some trails along Rock Creek. Effects would be controlled using best management practices. No impairment of wetland or floodplain resources.	No effects would occur. Wetlands and floodplains would continue to be protected in conformance with Executive Orders 11990 and 11988, respectively. No impairment of wetland or floodplain resources.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.
Deciduous forests	Current management practices would continue to protect the deciduous forest. Conversion of about a half acre of forested land to new paved trail area would be a long-term, minor, adverse effect on the deciduous forest. Disturbance of up to 5.8 acres of forest for a trail construction zone would be a minor, short-term, adverse effect. Rerouting trails currently on steep slopes, erosion-prone areas, riparian zones, or rare biotic communities would be a major, long-term, beneficial effect. No impairment of deciduous forest resources.	Current management practices would continue to protect deciduous forests. Erosion problems along heavily used or improperly designed trails would continue and probably worsen. No impairment of deciduous forest resources	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.
Protected and rare species	Long-term protection of endangered amphipods could be enhanced by implementing more active protection. Improved education and interpretation may increase the public's appreciation for these species and lead to better protection outside the park. No impairment of protected or rare species.	The National Park Service would continue to protect rare species and their supporting habitats. No impairment of protected or rare species.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.

Table 4: Summary of Impacts of the Alternatives (Continued)

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
Other native wildlife	Current management practices would continue to protect native wildlife. Minor, short-term, adverse effects from trail improvements and realignments would be controlled using best management practices. Reduced traffic speeds and volumes would reduce wildlife roadkill, a beneficial effect. For most species, the effect would be negligible. Effects on the box turtle would be moderate. Effects on the gray fox would be major. Better education of the public on the adverse effects of moving box turtles or removing them from the park would provide a moderate, long-term, beneficial effect on box turtles. No impairment of native wildlife resources.	Current management practices would continue to protect native wildlife in the park. No impairment of native wildlife resources.	Closure of portions of Beach Drive to motorized traffic would further reduce the number of terrestrial wildlife roadkills compared to Alternative B. For most species, the effect would be negligible. Effects on the box turtle would be moderate. Effects on the gray fox would be major. Other effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Closure of portions of Beach Drive to motorized traffic during mid-weekdays would reduce the number of terrestrial wildlife roadkills, especially for species that are active during the day. For most species, the effect would be negligible. Effects on the box turtle would be moderate. Effects on the gray fox would be major. Other effects would be the same as Alternative A.
Archeological resources	No significant adverse effect would occur because because the National Park Service would relocate any facilities that would disturb sites that potentially were eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Increased monitoring and improved visitor education would reduce the potential for non-construction-related significant adverse effects. The disturbance of sites could result in some irretrievable and irreversible loss of archeological resources. No impairment of archeological resources.	Current incremental degradation of sites and features would continue. No impairment of archeological resources.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.
Historic structures and cultural landscapes	A significant beneficial impact would occur to the Peirce-Kingle Mansion and Lodge House, which would be rehabilitated to preserve their architecturally significant features and would be used in accordance with park resource values. A significant beneficial impact would occur to historic trails where improvements or rehabilitation would enhance their integrity and preservation.	Historic structures and cultural landscapes would be protected, preserved, and interpreted in a manner consistent with NPS policies. No impairment of historic structures and cultural landscapes.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.	Effects would be the same as Alternative A.

Table 4: Summary of Impacts of the Alternatives (Continued)

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
Historic structures and cultural landscapes (continued)	Rehabilitation of the significant cultural landscape features and attributes of the Linnaean Hill and Peirce Mill areas would enhance park preservation and visitor understanding of park's historic settings. The disturbance of sites during new construction could result in some irretrievable and irreversible loss of resources. No impairment of historic structures and cultural landscapes.			
Traditional park character and visitor experience	The traditional character and appearance of the park would not change. Reduced noise because of reduced traffic speeds and volumes would have negligible to minor, long-term, beneficial impacts. Improvements to trails would have a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact. Rehabilitation of historic building and landscapes would have a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact. Improved education and interpretation facilities and staffing levels would enhance opportunities to learn about and experience the park's natural and cultural resources, a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact. Improved working conditions would result in a moderate, long-term, beneficial effect on park operations, but the intensity of the beneficial impact perceived by the public probably would be minor. Moderate, long-term, beneficial effect on recreational opportunities would occur because of slower traffic and improved education and interpretation opportunities. Improved access to many facilities throughout the park for individuals with impaired mobility would be a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact.	The traditional character and appearance of the park would not change. Park visitors would be adversely affected by escalating nonrecreational traffic in the park and on the parkway. Eroding trail segments could lead to unsightly and potentially unsafe conditions. Education and interpretation would continue to be limited by inaccurate, worn, and dated facilities and exhibits and insufficient staff levels. Inadequate administration and operation facilities could have a deleterious effect on visitors experience and safety. A large number of visitors would continue to participate in a wide spectrum of recreation opportunities, but recreation quality and opportunities for interpretation and education would continue to decline. Individuals with impaired mobility would continue to encounter access impediments in park buildings and on trails.	The elimination of the visitor experience of automobile travel along the length of the park, including the gorge area, would be a major adverse impact. A moderate, long-term, beneficial effect would result from the improved ability for park visitors to participate in non-motorized recreation along Beach Drive throughout the week. Reduced noise on the closed segments of Beach Drive would have minor to moderate, long-term, beneficial impacts. Effects from trail improvements, rehabilitation of historic buildings and landscapes, improved education and interpretation facilities and staffing, and improved working conditions would be the same as Alternative A. While the quality of recreation experiences would improve, there would be decreases in park use and the spectrum of opportunities. Improved access for people with impaired mobility would be a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact. Changes in access on the closed segments of Beach Drive would have moderate impacts but each person's perception would determine if they were beneficial or adverse.	The traditional character and appearance of the park would not change. The mid-day closures of Beach Drive segments would have a minor, adverse effect on automobile travel along the length of the park. A moderate, long-term, beneficial effect would result from the improved ability for park visitors to participate in non-motorized recreation along Beach Drive during workday and mid-day periods. Reduced noise on the closed segments of Beach Drive would have minor to moderate long-term, beneficial impacts. Effects from trail improvements, rehabilitation of historic buildings and landscapes, improved education and interpretation facilities and staffing, and improved working conditions would be the same as Alternative A. Daily installation and removal of traffic barriers would have a negligible to minor adverse effect on park operations. Moderate, long-term, beneficial effect on recreational opportunities would occur because of improved quality, the greatest spectrum, and improved education and interpretation opportunities. Effect on people with impaired mobility would be like Alternative C.

Table 4: Summary of Impacts of the Alternatives (Continued)

Park Feature	Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement
Public health and safety	Long-term, major, beneficial effects on public health and safety would occur, primarily because of the effectiveness of traffic-calming measures in reducing the number and severity of traffic accidents. Effects on crimes against persons and the effectiveness of emergency evacuations would be negligible.	Public health and safety would decline over time. Already high traffic volumes that would continue to increase throughout the park and on the parkway would represent the greatest threats to public health and safety.	Permanent closures of three segments of Beach Drive would have a long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial effect on safety. Other effects of this alternative would be the same as Alternative A.	Mid-day closures of three segments of Beach Drive would have a long-term, negligible to minor, beneficial effect on safety. Other effects of this alternative would be the same as Alternative A.
Regional and local transportation	During rush-hour periods, effects on traffic speeds and volumes would be negligible compared to Alternative B. Outside the rush-hour periods, traffic-calming measures and reduced speed limits would slow the speed of traffic. They also would reduce traffic volumes because some drivers who were not planning other recreation in the park would voluntarily use Ross Drive or non-park routes. The effects on levels of service would be negligible compared to Alternative B. However, the reduced motorized traffic volumes and speeds would reduce conflicts between automobile use and nonmotorized travel in the Rock Creek Valley. Throughout the day, improvements to recreation trails would enhance nonmotorized transportation in the park. During non-rush-hour periods, reduced automobile traffic speeds and volumes may increase nonmotorized travel on Beach Drive, particularly bicycle travel.	Congestion would continue to increase with increased traffic in the park and throughout the area. Continued conflicts would occur between recreational and nonrecreational users of park roads.	Nonrecreational traffic would be eliminated or substantially reduced in the park. Nonmotorized travel would be enhanced. Levels of service would improve on most segments of the parkway. Traffic volumes in the neighborhoods to the north of the park could increase in the short term until drivers learned alternate patterns. There would not be any long-term changes in levels of service in these neighborhoods. Changes in levels of service on city streets outside the park would be mixed, with some improvements and some decreases. Changes would be negligible to considerable.	Outside of mid-weekday closure periods, transportation conditions would be like those of Alternative A. During mid-weekday closures, nonrecreational traffic would be eliminated or substantially reduced in the park. Nonmotorized travel would be enhanced. During weekday Beach Drive closures, effects on traffic volumes in nearby neighborhoods would be the same as those described for Alternative C.
Community character	Negligible effects, relative to Alternative B, on community character and the quality of life of area residents or the economic health of businesses. Trail improvements and traffic control would improve nonmotorized recreation, benefiting citizens who use the park and park vicinity for these purposes. Environmental justice: No disproportionate routing of traffic to disadvantaged areas or ethnic neighborhoods would occur.	Changes in community character from park management activities would be minor compared to changes from social and economic conditions outside the park.	Eight segments would experience noticeably improved community characteristics associated with lower traffic levels during one or both of the peak-hours on weekdays. Nine road segments would experience a noticeable to considerable decline. Moderate beneficial effects would occur on regional opportunities for nonmotorized recreation. Environmental justice: No disproportionate routing of traffic to disadvantaged areas or ethnic neighborhoods would occur.	Except during mid-day closures on weekdays, effects would be the same as Alternative B. During the middle portion of weekdays, moderate beneficial effects would occur on regional opportunities for nonmotorized recreation. Environmental justice: No disproportionate routing of traffic to disadvantaged areas or ethnic neighborhoods would occur.

Next Steps

Where can I review a full copy of the final general management plan and environmental impact statement?

This summary presents only the highlights of the final general management plan and environmental impact statement. If you want to review the entire document, public reading copies are available from several sources, including local libraries and NPS offices.

The complete document can be reviewed and downloaded from links available on the Rock Creek Park site on the Internet at

<http://www.nps.gov/rocr/pphtml/documents.html>.

A limited number of printed copies are available from the National Park Service. A copy can be requested by calling 202-895-6000 or by writing to

National Park Service, Rock Creek Park
Superintendent
3545 Williamsburg Lane NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-1207

Copies were sent to the following libraries in the region. You may want to call in advance to confirm the availability of the document.

Chevy Chase Library
Cleveland Park Library
Georgetown Library
Juanita E. Thornton-Shepherd Park Library
Langston Community Library
Library of Congress
Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library
Mt. Pleasant Library
Northeast Library
Petworth Library
Tenley-Friendship Library
Watha T. Daniel/Shaw Library
Woodridge Library

Can I comment on the plan?

Yes. However, you should not duplicate the comments that already were made, either by you or others, on the draft general management plan and environmental impact statement. Those comments were addressed in the final general management plan and environmental impact statement and will not be revisited.

Summaries of all comments that were received from the public on the draft plan and environmental impact statement, and the NPS' responses to those comments, are provided in the companion volume entitled *Volume 2: Comments and Responses on the Draft Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement*. Copies of Volume 2 are available at the same locations as the final general management plan and environmental impact statement. Volume 2 also is available through the Internet links identified above.



All comments should be substantive. Substantive comments are defined as comments that:

- Reasonably question the accuracy of information in the document;
- Reasonably question the accuracy of the environmental analysis;
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the document; or
- Cause changes or revisions in the proposal.

Comments in favor of or against the proposed action or alternatives, or that only agree or disagree with NPS policy, are not considered substantive and will not receive consideration.

Written comments will be accepted for 60 days following publication of notification of availability of the final general management plan and environmental impact statement in the *Federal Register*.

Written comments can be sent to:

National Park Service, Rock Creek Park
Superintendent
3545 Williamsburg Lane NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-1207

You may comment by e-mail by sending comments to:
rocr_superintendent@nps.gov

The National Park Service also will accept comments sent by the Internet. A link through which you can provide comments electronically is available at

<http://www.nps.gov/rocr/pphtml/documents.html>

Regardless of how you comment, please include your name and street address with your message. Please submit electronic comments as a text file, avoiding the use of special characters or any form of encryption.

If you have questions about this document, you can call

Adrienne Coleman, Park Superintendent,
at 202-895-6000.

What happens to my comments?

The planning team will log every written comment that is received and review it to determine if it is substantive and raises concerns other than those already addressed. Appropriate changes will be made to address new, substantive comments.

What happens after the comment period ends?

At least 30 days after the close of the comment period, the National Park Service will issue a record of its final decision. Thereafter, the National Park Service will begin to implement the selected action.





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has the responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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