

0:0:0.0 --> 0:0:15.970

Stidham, Tammy

Good evening and welcome to the public meeting for the Upper Beach Dr Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. We will go ahead and get started and I will nick, if you just switch to the next line.

0:0:19.710 --> 0:0:49.580

Stidham, Tammy

Just a few housekeeping before I turn it over to the Superintendent. This meeting is being recorded and the recording will be available on our public and engagement website starting sometime tomorrow. You will be in listen only mode during the presentation. However, we welcome your questions in the chat box, which you should be able to see at the top of your screen as shown at the bottom here.

0:0:50.140 --> 0:0:57.550

Stidham, Tammy

We are gonna run through a presentation and then we'll answer whatever questions we have during the time that's left to us.

0:0:58.550 --> 0:0:59.140

Stidham, Tammy

Umm.

0:1:0.580 --> 0:1:2.190

Stidham, Tammy

Uh, next slide, Nick.

0:1:7.680 --> 0:1:38.190

Stidham, Tammy

And before the Superintendent gets started, just to reminder that we are not recording message comments during this meeting and that your formal comments are to be submitted either online at the URL posted on the screen or by US mail to the address listed below and they must be received by August 11th. I will also put into the chat that link and the US mail address to so that you can access it easily.

0:1:38.870 --> 0:1:45.340

Stidham, Tammy

This presentation in its entirety is also been made available at the website we indicate here.

0:1:46.320 --> 0:1:53.410

Stidham, Tammy

And it was posted just a few minutes ago, so if you need it, please go ahead and exit Julia. I'll turn to you now.

0:1:55.680 --> 0:2:24.770

Washburn, Julia L

Thank you, Tammy. That was Tammy Stidham, our head of planning for the National Capital Region. My name is Julia Washburn. I'm the Superintendent of Rock Creek Park and I'm joined by several of my park colleagues tonight. Nick Bartolomeo, who is our program manager for Resources Management, and

Brian Joyner, our deputy Superintendent. And they may at times be helping me out with this presentation.

0:2:25.330 --> 0:2:34.270

Washburn, Julia L

Thank you all for coming tonight. I'm very pleased to have you all here and I wanted to just let you know that.

0:2:35.390 --> 0:2:52.930

Washburn, Julia L

Our, our our agenda for tonight is we'll talk a little bit about the purpose of the meeting. We'll talk about the neepa process as well as the National Historic Preservation Act and how they fit together. We'll give a little background on the project. We'll talk about the.

0:2:53.10 --> 0:3:24.860

Washburn, Julia L

Therefore, prefer proposed alternatives and the NPS preferred alternative, and then we'll return again. So if you didn't get it the first time, you'll get it a chance to learn how to comment and we'll have it question and answer period. And as Tammy said, please put your questions in the chat and she will make sure that they are posed tonight so that we can try to answer them. And as she said, I want to remind you that any comments that you put in the chat.

0:3:25.490 --> 0:3:51.580

Washburn, Julia L

Will not be added to the official record in order to get your comments added to the official record, you have to go to our planning website and put them in there or put them in snail mail address to me at the national at Rock Creek Park headquarters and we'll put those that link and that address up again at the end.

0:3:53.400 --> 0:3:54.720

Washburn, Julia L

Next slide please.

0:3:59.40 --> 0:4:25.430

Washburn, Julia L

OK, so very quickly tonight we're just we want to describe the existing conditions in the park and we want to show you the alternatives for the management of Upper Beach Drive that we have been considering including our preferred alternative and we want to invite your comments. And so the next slide.

0:4:26.110 --> 0:4:26.720

Washburn, Julia L

Umm.

0:4:27.480 --> 0:4:33.100

Washburn, Julia L

What is NEPA, the national Environmental Policy Act?

0:4:34.320 --> 0:5:3.350

Washburn, Julia L

It's part of the government's planning and decision making process and in order to make any changes to management of significant changes to management of a National Park or any particular actions we take within it, we need to follow the neepa process and it requires us to analyze the environmental impacts of federal actions and.

0:5:3.430 --> 0:5:16.830

Washburn, Julia L

It requires us to engage the public in that decision making process and to gather everybody's points of view and input those into the decision making process.

0:5:17.890 --> 0:5:29.650

Washburn, Julia L

The goal for NIPA and and NHLPA is to ensure that we're making good informed decisions. Next slide, please.

0:5:32.40 --> 0:5:33.330

Washburn, Julia L

So. Umm.

0:5:34.420 --> 0:5:59.190

Washburn, Julia L

The Neepa planning process is very well laid out. We conduct a public scoping to determine the range of issues to be addressed and for identifying issues related to the proposed action. We did that if you will recall in mid 2021 and in fact just about a year ago, we were having several public meetings about the scoping process and then.

0:5:59.630 --> 0:6:5.910

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, we document the affected environment and determine what potential.

0:6:5.960 --> 0:6:27.300

Washburn, Julia L

A consequent consequences might be of the action and also develop mitigating measures. So we went through that process and we completed that in the spring and then we prepared the A for public review. We just finished that on July 10th.

0:6:28.500 --> 0:6:32.220

Washburn, Julia L

And released as you know, released the document.

0:6:32.700 --> 0:6:49.930

Washburn, Julia L

And and then the public review and comment process is open from July 11th through August 11th. So it's open currently and you have until August 11th to get your comments in.

0:6:52.730 --> 0:7:18.300

Washburn, Julia L

OK, the National Historic Preservation Act that establishes a process, it's section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties. And these are either listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, which has very specific criteria.

0:7:19.760 --> 0:7:37.40

Washburn, Julia L

And basically when we go through this section 106 process, it can include in a determination of no adverse effect, which means it's all good. It's not going to affect any of the resources or if it will affect any of the resources.

0:7:37.380 --> 0:8:6.750

Washburn, Julia L

And then we have to enter into a memorandum of agreement with all the consulting parties that consulted through the Section 106 process to determine what the outcome should be and if we need to, if there's any adverse effects we need to mitigate those. And so that's what goes into the memorandum of agreement. So the goal is to avoid and minimize potential harm to historic resource.

0:8:7.130 --> 0:8:14.280

Washburn, Julia L

So that goes hand in hand with the NEPA process and you can see the process that we've been going through here.

0:8:14.740 --> 0:8:18.650

Washburn, Julia L

And and so in this in summer of 21.

0:8:19.90 --> 0:8:49.230

Washburn, Julia L

And we initiated both the scoping and 106 and we've been moving through those two processes in parallel and now we are at the public review and comments on the EA and determination of no effect or prepare agreement document with Section 106 of NHLPA, so that this where these arrows are, it shows you we are here. That's where we are.

0:8:49.570 --> 0:9:0.200

Washburn, Julia L

And when we get past this, we'll be having a decision document and a memorandum of agreement or a programmatic agreement if those are needed.

0:9:4.160 --> 0:9:6.630

Washburn, Julia L

And environmental assessment.

0:9:6.770 --> 0:9:9.590

Washburn, Julia L

And issues and impacts.

0:9:10.370 --> 0:9:31.60

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, the topics that we analyzed so we we listen to the scoping and these are the topics we ended up analyzing in the environmental assessment. So visitor use and experience and this is looking at recreational use, it's also looking at.

0:9:32.140 --> 0:9:49.530

Washburn, Julia L

Use by cars in the community. It's also looking at accessibility for people with disabilities and listening to sort of all the different views on how people would like to use an experience. The part.

0:9:50.350 --> 0:10:8.400

Washburn, Julia L

And then we looked at transportation operator operations and safety and any mitigations, we safety mitigations we would need to put in based on what the preferred alternative might be. And we looked at transportation and safety for.

0:10:8.620 --> 0:10:14.350

Washburn, Julia L

And all of the the alternatives that we considered and that came out of scoping.

0:10:14.770 --> 0:10:26.960

Washburn, Julia L

And and I and I will just add that the District Department of Transportation offered us an traffic analysis.

0:10:27.300 --> 0:10:43.710

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, about a year ago, during the scoping process, however, they issued a new traffic and safety analysis. Actually just a few weeks ago and.

0:10:43.820 --> 0:10:45.70

Washburn, Julia L

I and.

0:10:46.210 --> 0:11:11.40

Washburn, Julia L

It gives an updated view from their point of view of transportation, operations and safety. That document was not originally attached to the EA because it came in very late and we could not analyze it at the time we were finishing the EA. We have analyzed it now and we are working to get it posted to.

0:11:12.260 --> 0:11:40.790

Washburn, Julia L

The Pepsi side the the, the, the public engagement and comments planning comments site for for you to take a look at. It will eventually be attached to the EA as the original D dot study is so I encourage you to take a look at that second D dot study that came in very, very recently and we will speak to that a little bit later.

0:11:41.310 --> 0:12:0.460

Washburn, Julia L

And we also looked at the historic districts in Rock Creek Park and what kind of effect a change in Upper Beach Dr Management would have on the historic district and the and the historic properties and landscapes within the historic district.

0:12:1.780 --> 0:12:32.990

Washburn, Julia L

And that brings me to the cultural landscapes, which are part of the historic district, and we also looked at cultural landscapes, cultural landscapes, we have a variety of them in the park, but the park itself is also a cultural landscape. So we looked at the potential changes in transportation management, or Rd management for Upper Beach Drive and what that might have on the cultural landscape. And then, of course, we also looked very carefully.

0:12:33.130 --> 0:12:47.690

Washburn, Julia L

At wildlife and wildlife habitat and what, if any, impacts a change in in management and Upper Beach, Dr would have and what those would be for each of the potential alternatives.

0:12:49.340 --> 0:12:50.700

Washburn, Julia L

OK, next slide.

0:12:53.880 --> 0:12:54.860

Washburn, Julia L

Umm OK.

0:12:55.380 --> 0:13:5.930

Washburn, Julia L

I we also looked at air quality, water resources, threatening endangered species and archaeological resources.

0:13:6.270 --> 0:13:22.530

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And we for Eric quality. It was determined that impacts on air quality would be minimal because regardless of which way what decisions were made based upon the.

0:13:22.640 --> 0:13:25.220

Washburn, Julia L

And the fact that.

0:13:25.600 --> 0:13:35.550

Washburn, Julia L

And given all of the admissions and all of the traffic in DC, they impact from lack of.

0:13:35.930 --> 0:13:36.380

Washburn, Julia L

And.

0:13:37.30 --> 0:13:52.430

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, cars on this road would actually be pretty minimal to air quality water resources. We also looked at while having no cars on Beach Dr minimizes the amount of.

0:13:52.670 --> 0:13:59.250

Washburn, Julia L

And you know, oil, gas and heavy metals that will be on the road.

0:13:59.650 --> 0:14:30.660

Washburn, Julia L

And the amount of the of these things that go into the Rock Creek based on the traffic on Beach Drive, again our minimal due to all the vast amounts of impervious surface we have in DC and all of the the runoff in storm water that we are getting into the Creek. So that will that would not make a significant change either way. We looked at our threatening endangered species.

0:14:31.60 --> 0:14:32.410

Washburn, Julia L

We do have.

0:14:32.560 --> 0:14:58.170

Washburn, Julia L

And two endangered species and one threatened species in the park. Currently that and that one may be elevated to endangered. So we have an endangered bat. The Indiana bat. We also have threatened bat, which is the northern long eared bat and that is the one that might be elevated to endangered later this year.

0:14:58.710 --> 0:15:29.680

Washburn, Julia L

And and we also have the haze spring amphipod, which you probably know of as a small shrimp like creature that lives in our aquifers and comes up in the seat ups. And there are lots of seeps, especially in in Rock Creek Park in general, but especially in the portion of land between Beach Drive and 16th St there are a lot of seeps there, and that is the.

0:15:29.900 --> 0:15:48.900

Washburn, Julia L

Essentially, the habitat of the hay spring amphipod and it lives nowhere else on earth that we know of, and that is an endangered species and we are in the middle right now of working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on a recovery plan for the.

0:15:49.390 --> 0:16:5.740

Washburn, Julia L

The the uh, the amphipods. So we are in the midst of doing that. We will end up in a cooperative agreement or, excuse me, a memorandum of agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Service and then we will be in the next year implementing some pretty significant.

0:16:5.810 --> 0:16:13.440

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, recovery management changes regarding the hay spring. So those are to come.

0:16:14.880 --> 0:16:30.220

Washburn, Julia L

And then we also looked at archaeological resources and we dismissed those because this won't really require any digging other than maybe putting some signs in and that shouldn't have a big impact on archaeological resources.

0:16:31.660 --> 0:16:32.850

Washburn, Julia L

OK, next slide.

0:16:36.940 --> 0:16:39.930

Washburn, Julia L

So a little bit about the project background.

0:16:40.420 --> 0:16:50.880

Washburn, Julia L

And so of a Rock Creek Park, as you know, was established by Congress in on September 27th, 1890.

0:16:51.480 --> 0:17:9.460

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And it's one of the oldest and largest. Well, it's one of the oldest national parks in the system and one it. And it's one of the oldest and largest urban parks in the National Park system. In fact, I think it is the oldest urban park in the National Park system.

0:17:10.10 --> 0:17:14.660

Washburn, Julia L

And and as stated in our enabling legislation.

0:17:15.160 --> 0:17:45.530

Washburn, Julia L

And the Rock Creek Park is, quote, perpetually dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and the enjoyment of the people of the United States and the legislation also authorized the construction of deriving roads and trails for horses and pedestrians, while maintaining that the parks, timber animals and curiosities be preserved in their natural condition.

0:17:45.650 --> 0:17:47.400

Washburn, Julia L

As nearly as possible.

0:17:48.210 --> 0:17:54.800

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And so that legislation forms the basis of all planning and management in Rock Creek Park.

0:17:55.620 --> 0:18:8.70

Washburn, Julia L



And now, in 1966, the section of Beach Drive from Joyce Rd to Broad branch was first limited to bicycle and pedestrian traffic on Sundays.

0:18:8.830 --> 0:18:32.610

Washburn, Julia L

And then Beach, Dr automobile closures grew to include additional sections of the roadway on the northern end as well as other park roads such as Bingham Drive and Sheryl Drive, and these closures eventually were extended to Saturdays and federal holidays as well.

0:18:35.720 --> 0:18:37.950

Washburn, Julia L

So oops, excuse me just a second.

0:18:39.230 --> 0:18:40.460

Washburn, Julia L

I hit the wrong button.

0:18:42.440 --> 0:18:49.810

Washburn, Julia L

OK. And so that that that basically gives you, you know just a little bit of background about what we're talking about here.

0:18:50.720 --> 0:18:52.100

Washburn, Julia L

Next slide please.

0:18:52.660 --> 0:19:9.210

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, so as many of you know, Rock Creek and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway final General management plan and environmental Impact statement was issued in the early 2000s.

0:19:9.910 --> 0:19:12.800

Washburn, Julia L

And Upper beach drive.

0:19:14.940 --> 0:19:26.0

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, that determined that document determined that upper Upper Beach Dr would be open to motor vehicles on weekdays and close for recreational use on weekends and federal holidays.

0:19:26.320 --> 0:19:33.210

Washburn, Julia L

And and then non recreational through traffic would be would be accommodated in the park.

0:19:34.710 --> 0:19:38.70

Washburn, Julia L

And let us go to the next slide.

0:19:40.260 --> 0:19:43.750

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, so this brings us to April of 2020.

0:19:44.350 --> 0:19:52.0

Washburn, Julia L

And when we first were hit with the COVID pandemic and at the beginning of that pandemic.

0:19:52.150 --> 0:20:22.950

Washburn, Julia L

And we decided to close the road for the purposes of providing sufficient room for park visitors to undertake essential recreation while maintaining a 6 foot distance from each other and the temporary closures were too have ended on June 11th, 2021. That was the date when the District of Columbia mayors COVID-19 reopening plan was scheduled to be fully implemented.

0:20:23.680 --> 0:20:24.140

Washburn, Julia L

Umm.

0:20:24.920 --> 0:20:34.950

Washburn, Julia L

And while the development of this plan is underway, NPS has extended the roadway closures right now through September 5th.

0:20:35.650 --> 0:20:44.330

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. But we will extend those closures until a final decision document is signed for.

0:20:45.160 --> 0:20:48.910

Washburn, Julia L

Napa and and the section 106.

0:20:52.820 --> 0:21:2.20

Washburn, Julia L

Umm so the purpose and the need for management of Upper Beach drive or a change in management to Upper Beach Drive.

0:21:2.960 --> 0:21:14.870

Washburn, Julia L

When the purpose of the plan was to develop a comprehensive management approach and that would encout taken to consideration, Beach Drive and the adjacent roadways.

0:21:15.310 --> 0:21:24.140

Washburn, Julia L

And and that accounts for the needs of motorized and non motorized users, while minimizing impacts to park resources.

0:21:24.540 --> 0:21:43.510

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And if the existing park management strategies change, this plan will also serve to amend our general management plan regarding management of these roadways. So this era and the decision document will then amend the general management plan.

0:21:44.720 --> 0:21:45.380

Washburn, Julia L

Umm.

0:21:48.590 --> 0:22:7.340

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, so we feel like the plan is needed and that's why we initiated it to better understand the possible long term changes in the use of Upper Beach Drive and the adjacent roadways and to determine if our management strategies need to change or remain the same.

0:22:10.260 --> 0:22:11.280

Washburn, Julia L

Next slide.

0:22:11.390 --> 0:22:17.950

Washburn, Julia L

Right. So just to review the alternatives, as we're released in the EA.

0:22:18.890 --> 0:22:49.200

Washburn, Julia L

Umm alternative One which was the pre COVID pandemic management so that would be no change to the management of Upper Beach Drive as it was prior to COVID and so that means closing the following roadways on weekends and holidays. So that's Bingham drive, Cheryl Drive and Beach Drive in three sections which go from Broadbridge Road to Joyce Rd. And then picnic area 10.

0:22:49.400 --> 0:23:1.960

Washburn, Julia L

To wise road and and also wise Rd would be open for cross for cross traffic and what West Beach Drive is then would be closed.

0:23:2.940 --> 0:23:5.120

Washburn, Julia L

And all the way up to the Maryland boundary.

0:23:6.70 --> 0:23:21.80

Washburn, Julia L

And and so Beach drive between George Rd, Joyce Rd and Picnic 10 would remain open to vehicles only for the purposes of providing access to the group picnic areas right there from 6 to 10 on Beach Drive.

0:23:22.40 --> 0:23:30.670

Washburn, Julia L

And for alternative 1A, a small change, Ross, Dr would remain open at all times.

0:23:35.20 --> 0:24:1.980

Washburn, Julia L

Alternative two, which would be a full time closure for specifically for recreation and in this case that full closure would be including the following roadways all year round. That would be Bingham drive, Sheryl Drive and Beach Drive in the three sections that we mentioned in the previous slide.

0:24:2.460 --> 0:24:21.370

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And then between Joyce Rd. And Picnic area 10 Beach Dr would remain open as it has been to vehicles. And again this is for accessing the picnic areas. However, in alternative to raw strive would remain open so we would reopen Ross Drive.

0:24:23.430 --> 0:24:24.150

Washburn, Julia L

Umm.

0:24:25.60 --> 0:24:28.470

Washburn, Julia L

And let's go to the next slide.

0:24:29.180 --> 0:24:32.100

Washburn, Julia L

Which is alternative 3.

0:24:32.880 --> 0:24:37.270

Washburn, Julia L

And and this this is the NPS preferred alternative.

0:24:38.390 --> 0:25:3.230

Washburn, Julia L

Seasonal closure for recreation and so closing the following road race to motor vehicle use would, in addition to the weekends and holidays would also be closed from Memorial Day to Labor Day. So from Labor Day to Memorial Day.

0:25:4.750 --> 0:25:15.540

Washburn, Julia L

Bingham Drive and Cheryl Drive and uh Beach Drive in those three sections would be open, so for three seasons of the year.

0:25:16.80 --> 0:25:32.470

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, it would be open five days a week to vehicles and during the summers it would be closed for recreation and it would also be closed for recreation on weekends and holidays and in this.

0:25:32.580 --> 0:25:39.170

Washburn, Julia L

And in this decision, we were really trying to strike a balance.

0:25:40.390 --> 0:25:49.60

Washburn, Julia L

And and create equity for many of the various people who need and want to use the road.

0:25:49.480 --> 0:25:58.140

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And so that that we're looking at sort of a way to find some balance of use?

0:25:58.580 --> 0:26:5.290

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And we also were seriously taking into consideration accessibility issues there.

0:26:6.990 --> 0:26:12.340

Washburn, Julia L

And then, you know between, Joyce wrote and Picnic 10, we would still have.

0:26:12.440 --> 0:26:18.440

Washburn, Julia L

And during the close times, those sections would be open again for getting to the picnic areas.

0:26:19.200 --> 0:26:26.190

Washburn, Julia L

And again in this in this alternative Ross Dr would be open again to vehicles at all times.

0:26:30.840 --> 0:26:31.290

Washburn, Julia L

Uh.

0:26:33.640 --> 0:26:43.190

Washburn, Julia L

OK, so a little bit more on why NPS is proposing to select the preferred alternative.

0:26:44.240 --> 0:26:54.60

Washburn, Julia L

And and so there's a variety of reasons, and I would offer that it is a late it's layered there. There are many reasons for this.

0:26:54.500 --> 0:27:5.710

Washburn, Julia L

And so by having the seasonal closure and continuing with the weekend closures, it allows for active recreational use.

0:27:6.120 --> 0:27:14.740

Washburn, Julia L

And it's at a time when recreational visitation is at the adest highest for Rock Creek.

0:27:15.940 --> 0:27:25.490

Washburn, Julia L

And that, of course, would be, you know, the the, the seasonal closure plus it would also include the weekends and the federal holidays throughout the year.

0:27:25.900 --> 0:27:39.440

Washburn, Julia L

And we feel that it creates a safer conditions during the summer by reducing the conflicts between motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians, and provides right routes for cyclists.

0:27:40.520 --> 0:27:45.70

Washburn, Julia L

Largely free of motor vehicles between the North End of Rock Creek Park.

0:27:45.820 --> 0:27:48.860

Washburn, Julia L

Multi use trail and the Maryland State lines so.

0:27:49.390 --> 0:28:16.660

Washburn, Julia L

And we feel that we safer during the highest period, peak visitation, recreational visitation of the year, but it also provides non motorized access for persons with disabilities to areas of the park that lack separated pathways and accessible trails. So this provides greater access to people with disabilities.

0:28:17.840 --> 0:28:36.50

Washburn, Julia L

And it provides for decreased effects to the local transportation network during the period when the traffic volumes are highest. And again, we did receive new information recently from D dot that supports that need.

0:28:36.550 --> 0:28:51.680

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And it provides protection and preservation of wildlife and habitat for several species, and we feel that during the summertime the popular the vegetation and.

0:28:51.760 --> 0:29:21.370

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, it both the understory and and the ground level there are are densely leafed out and it's harder for people to cut through and make their own trails, and it's less likely that visitors will impair the hey, I the amphipod habitat.

0:29:21.770 --> 0:29:34.0

Washburn, Julia L

And we're hoping that less dogs would be off leash in that area and people would be sticking more to the trails because of the dense visit vegetation during this summer.

0:29:35.50 --> 0:29:56.960

Washburn, Julia L

And and we made, you know, we chose this preferred alternative based on extensive public input coordination with DDOT and internal deliberation and analysis where we were really looking at issues around accessibility.

0:29:57.340 --> 0:30:27.10

Washburn, Julia L

And and we did here during the scoping process that that from various different members of the

accessibility community that both some suggested greater access for people with mobility impairments with the road closed and others felt that they had greater accessibility to the park when they were able to get.

0:30:27.100 --> 0:30:35.540

Washburn, Julia L

I down beach drive with a vehicle so this is a compromise.

0:30:36.30 --> 0:30:56.620

Washburn, Julia L

And and we are trying to, as we said strike a balance. However, we are, as it says in the EA, we are using an adaptive management approach where we will be monitoring how things are going.

0:30:57.790 --> 0:31:27.550

Washburn, Julia L

And we will have the option to make changes as we see the need for changes. So we are gonna be looking at this and monitoring everything closely and and then we will be reevaluating at certain times and we have the option right to create a different management alternative in the future.

0:31:28.30 --> 0:31:30.540

Washburn, Julia L

Based on how everything is going.

0:31:33.710 --> 0:31:55.820

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, OK, so this slide summarizes the impacts of the various alternatives and to summarize impacts to the historic district and cultural landscape would be minimal under the preferred alternative recreation access would increase during oops. Wait, sorry, keep hitting the wrong button here.

0:31:57.440 --> 0:32:26.790

Washburn, Julia L

So recreational access would increase during the summer months under the preferred alternative and and it will be more than the prepandemic management traffic would increase on nearby roads and there would be impacts to traffic patterns based on the time of year. Finally, while there would be benefits to some or removal of motor vehicles from Upper Beach Drive.

0:32:27.20 --> 0:32:34.490

Washburn, Julia L

The increase in recreation could lead to impacts on the adjacent forest areas and the plants and wildlife.

0:32:34.900 --> 0:32:42.450

Washburn, Julia L

And that those areas contain and as we mentioned in the EA we have seen.

0:32:42.890 --> 0:33:3.870

Washburn, Julia L

And a vast increase in the social trails or basically off trail use of the park and an increase in dog dogs off leash leash in that part of the park throughout the year. And so we're hoping that with.

0:33:5.410 --> 0:33:6.720

Washburn, Julia L  
With restricted.

0:33:8.320 --> 0:33:31.370

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, you know, with having the road open part of the time to vehicles during a lot of the year, that May may hopefully get to a decrease in the impacts that we are seeing to the forest and to the hay ibadat that as I said before, we are also going to be working to.

0:33:31.750 --> 0:33:37.0

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. Work with US Fish and Wildlife Service to manage that habitat.

0:33:37.260 --> 0:33:43.790

Washburn, Julia L

And so at the time, now that we're doing this, we're we really strongly feel that.

0:33:43.880 --> 0:33:48.20

Washburn, Julia L

And we feel the best time for.

0:33:48.360 --> 0:34:2.330

Washburn, Julia L

And recreation is during the IS during the months where we have leaf out, which discourages people from cutting, cutting through from 16th St down to.

0:34:2.680 --> 0:34:8.760

Washburn, Julia L

And excuse me down to beach Dr OK, next slide.

0:34:10.400 --> 0:34:14.140

Washburn, Julia L

Again, so returning to how to comment.

0:34:15.380 --> 0:34:40.460

Washburn, Julia L

Umm you can comment online and you can go to [aparkplanning.nps.gov/beach](http://aparkplanning.nps.gov/beach) drive where you can input your comments. You can also access the EA there and all the attachments and that is where we will be posting the most recent D dot study.

0:34:41.810 --> 0:35:10.270

Washburn, Julia L

You can also mail your comments in attention Beach Dr EA Rock Creek Park, 3545 Williamsburg Lane, NW, Washington DC 20008 and you can submit those comments online all the way up into until 11:59 PM on August 11th, or postmarked.

0:35:10.550 --> 0:35:40.440

Washburn, Julia L



By August 11th and this says 2021, but it's actually 2022. Sorry about that. And those will all be taken into serious consideration. It's very helpful when we get points of view and often from the the public comments we get new suggestions or the public comes up with things that perhaps we hadn't thought of. So we very much welcome and.

0:35:40.560 --> 0:35:45.430

Washburn, Julia L

Take into consideration all the comments that we receive.

0:35:46.120 --> 0:35:46.600

Washburn, Julia L

Umm.

0:35:47.500 --> 0:36:11.580

Washburn, Julia L

And so that leads us to, UM, questions. UM, and this is the time for you to type your questions at any time into the chat box and the chat chat box is being moderated and we will attempt to answer all of your questions just as best as we can.

0:36:12.160 --> 0:36:18.130

Washburn, Julia L

And so that concludes my part of the presentation.

0:36:27.740 --> 0:36:29.170

Stidham, Tammy

OK. Thank you, Julia.

0:36:29.950 --> 0:36:45.330

Stidham, Tammy

Umm, we have been capturing comments. We've been capturing questions and we're still capturing questions. So if you have additional questions, please keep adding to them to the track and we'll try to keep up.

0:36:46.430 --> 0:37:0.310

Stidham, Tammy

So Julia, the first question is in relations. You have a draft finding of no significant impact. You plan to issue with this EA.

0:37:1.580 --> 0:37:25.170

Washburn, Julia L

And after the public comment period and after the analysis of all the comments, then we will be issuing a decision document, which would be a finding of no significant impact, but we will be taking, as I said, all the comments into consideration before we issue a final decision document.

0:37:27.650 --> 0:37:40.300

Stidham, Tammy

OK, so the next comment that we have a question we have is, does your EA assess a proposed action that may have a potential significant impact on the human environment?

0:37:43.380 --> 0:38:1.320

Washburn, Julia L

And well, we looked at, as I said before and visitor use and the many types of visitor use. And so we looked, I guess from the point of view of the human environment from the perspective of the park.

0:38:6.850 --> 0:38:13.650

Stidham, Tammy

Next question, why was an air quality analysis not considered in the environmental scope?

0:38:15.240 --> 0:38:35.630

Washburn, Julia L

Right. So we did take into consideration air quality issues and we dismissed them based on our scientists analysis that the amount of change to air quality would be minimal and therefore it was not considered for further analysis.

0:38:40.510 --> 0:38:46.450

Stidham, Tammy

I trail off, let me know because it says I'm having poor Internet quality, so I'll try to just let me know if they fade off. I'll.

0:38:48.680 --> 0:38:50.180

Washburn, Julia L

Yeah. Oh, you froze.

0:38:51.580 --> 0:38:54.450

Washburn, Julia L

Do you think Nick could pick up the comments, the questions?

0:38:56.30 --> 0:38:57.150

Bartolomeo, Nick

Give me a second, Julia.

0:38:56.490 --> 0:38:57.240

Stidham, Tammy

My back.

0:38:57.860 --> 0:38:59.100

Bartolomeo, Nick

You my best to find them.

0:39:2.0 --> 0:39:3.680

Washburn, Julia L

Or in Tammy, are you back now?

0:39:5.130 --> 0:39:6.600

Washburn, Julia L

No, she's still frozen.

0:39:8.520 --> 0:39:16.470

Washburn, Julia L

OK, give us a moment and and we will quickly change over to Nick, who will continue to.

0:39:17.840 --> 0:39:20.250

Washburn, Julia L

Moderate the questions and give them to me.

0:39:21.400 --> 0:39:21.820

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm.

0:39:23.150 --> 0:39:32.850

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK, so the next one is I get that I think it's reducing bike traffic, I get reducing bike traffic during rush hour. It could just one lane be open for vehicle traffic.

0:39:35.20 --> 0:39:59.80

Washburn, Julia L

And so that was one thing that we did consider. It was in the comments that we received and we did not consider it further, basically because of traffic and safety, safety issues and it would also require a fair amount of.

0:39:59.200 --> 0:40:2.810

Washburn, Julia L

And capacity for the US Park Police.

0:40:3.210 --> 0:40:11.510

Washburn, Julia L

And to be doing that and so it really was dismissed as not feasible from a capacity point of view and a safety point of view.

0:40:12.930 --> 0:40:18.260

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK. How about the noise that all the cars and motorcycles will add to the environment?

0:40:20.350 --> 0:40:25.850

Washburn, Julia L

Yes. Well, and that is a consideration and they do add noise.

0:40:26.290 --> 0:40:56.100

Washburn, Julia L

And and the beach Dr area is quieter when the road is closed to vehicles, and however, the road will still be closed. Vehicles on weekends and holidays. And now the increased period of time during the summer. And we will still have noise five days a week during spring.

0:40:56.180 --> 0:41:2.310

Washburn, Julia L

Winter and fall, but there are substantial times when that noise will not be there.

0:41:4.710 --> 0:41:14.270

Bartolomeo, Nick

Have you analyzed in detail whether the impacts and alternatives and the in the EA are consistent with the general management plan for Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway?

0:41:17.610 --> 0:41:21.460

Washburn, Julia L

I'm. I'm gonna ask you to answer that Nick or Tammy.

0:41:24.560 --> 0:41:25.320

Stidham, Tammy

My hair.

0:41:26.170 --> 0:41:26.560

Bartolomeo, Nick

There you go.

0:41:26.480 --> 0:41:27.760

Washburn, Julia L

I can't. Yeah, we can hear you.

0:41:28.230 --> 0:41:55.570

Stidham, Tammy

Oh, great. So I'm going to leave my camera off. Maybe that will help. So we did evaluate this proposed action with the general management plan. As Julia mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. This will effectively amend that decision that was originally made and we looked at all of the impact topics that were evaluated and the general management plan and what needed to be evaluated here. So we did a very careful crosswalk between the two documents.

0:41:58.460 --> 0:41:59.90

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Tammy.

0:42:0.270 --> 0:42:11.50

Bartolomeo, Nick

Why were the traffic calming and speed enforcement measures in the 2007 management plan said that were required to reduce traffic speeds and volumes and improve visitor safety through the park never implemented.

0:42:12.230 --> 0:42:16.540

Washburn, Julia L

And it's a great question and I don't know the answer to that.

0:42:17.620 --> 0:42:25.750

Washburn, Julia L

However, we will be putting those into place and we need to work with.

0:42:27.130 --> 0:42:38.940

Washburn, Julia L

Our transportation team and federal highways to get those implemented, but we will be acting on those. I can't speak to why they didn't happen in the past, but I can speak to the fact that we will be doing them in the future.

0:42:49.620 --> 0:42:50.60

Washburn, Julia L

True.

0:42:50.860 --> 0:42:51.290

Washburn, Julia L

Mm-hmm.

0:42:57.850 --> 0:42:58.230

Washburn, Julia L

Yeah.

0:42:39.570 --> 0:43:9.140

Bartolomeo, Nick

And Julia, just let me point out that we have done that in two places. We put traffic calming down by the new bicycle. I mean the by the pedestrian crosswalk and by the zoo at Harvard St and there's also a small traffic calming, a speed bump by just South of Blagdon. So there are two measures in the park. But you're right, we will be looking at speed reduction, speed tables and other measures in the sections of each drive north of broad branch.

0:43:10.220 --> 0:43:25.510

Washburn, Julia L

Yes. And we actually have a new safety study coming from Volpi, which is the Department of Transportations Traffic Analysis Group and we're looking forward to having that come sometime this fall.

0:43:26.670 --> 0:43:31.900

Bartolomeo, Nick

And that kind of parlays into the next question, Julia, why doesn't safety play a bigger role in this decision?

0:43:34.550 --> 0:43:41.800

Washburn, Julia L

So as we said before, as I said before, this is a multilayered decision.

0:43:42.840 --> 0:43:52.60

Washburn, Julia L

Certainly safety is a high high priority for us, but we're also looking at the various.

0:43:52.500 --> 0:44:19.690

Washburn, Julia L

Uh, types of visitor use, and we're also looking at wildlife preservation. As I said before, and we are looking at, we definitely are looking at safety and it's we're looking right. What we're doing is trying to find a balance of use and preservation and accessibility in this decision.

0:44:21.980 --> 0:44:22.500

Bartolomeo, Nick  
Miss Julia.

0:44:23.770 --> 0:44:29.710

Bartolomeo, Nick  
Can we share the National Park Service, share the review comments of this draft a by the DOI Solicitor's Office.

0:44:31.400 --> 0:44:38.440

Washburn, Julia L  
So I'll take a crack at that, but maybe Tammy and or Nick can help me.

0:44:40.260 --> 0:44:41.350

Washburn, Julia L  
We did an.

0:44:40.570 --> 0:44:42.800

Stidham, Tammy  
Julia, I'm happy to jump in on that one.

0:44:42.930 --> 0:44:43.600

Washburn, Julia L  
Please do.

0:44:45.190 --> 0:45:14.190

Stidham, Tammy  
The Park Service has received a FOIA request for all of the individual comments that were received during the scoping period and we are in the process of preparing and responding to that request. In the meantime, the comment summary is posted to the the Pepsi website and available for review, and it goes over all of the topic areas that the comments fall into and how many people we received comments from, but not the individual comments.

0:45:14.280 --> 0:45:14.860

Stidham, Tammy  
Themselves.

0:45:18.120 --> 0:45:24.420

Bartolomeo, Nick  
OK, have have you considered that some people might simply not travel to the city via car? If Beach Dr remains closed?

0:45:29.660 --> 0:45:33.310

Washburn, Julia L  
Well, there are other roadways that you can take into the city.

0:45:34.470 --> 0:45:48.500

Washburn, Julia L

You know you can take from the north, you can take Georgia Ave you can take 16th St and you can you can take Connecticut Ave you can take 13th St 14th St I mean there are a number of ways.

0:45:49.640 --> 0:45:55.240

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK. Can you post this D dot traffic analysis and I think we mentioned that earlier that yes, we will.

0:45:55.680 --> 0:45:56.170

Washburn, Julia L

Yeah.

0:45:56.560 --> 0:46:0.240

Bartolomeo, Nick

We'll make it 508 compliant and then and then it will be posted.

0:46:1.140 --> 0:46:3.330

Washburn, Julia L

As soon as we can, as soon as we can.

0:46:4.730 --> 0:46:5.490

Bartolomeo, Nick

Did national.

0:46:4.940 --> 0:46:25.610

Stidham, Tammy

We just add to that that as an appendix to the EA is the first traffic analysis that we received from the District Department of Transportation and that the document that we will release in addition that we received late in the process will be posted as well. So both of those traffic reports will be available.

0:46:28.120 --> 0:46:39.940

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you. Did National Park Service do an equity analysis by making the road unsafe 75% of the year for people who can't afford a car, it seems to further entrench discrimination based on income.

0:46:43.810 --> 0:46:47.500

Washburn, Julia L

Well, we are definitely looking at equity.

0:46:47.900 --> 0:47:4.360

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And part of the reason that we think that we should have a balance between being open and closed is so that everybody who wants to access the road in the way that they need to.

0:47:5.580 --> 0:47:7.730

Washburn, Julia L

We'll have an opportunity to do so.

0:47:9.150 --> 0:47:40.980

Bartolomeo, Nick

Can I just add please that you know one of Julia's a biggest initiatives since she took her office is to improve access into the park, especially from the east side. We've we are working right now on putting in a new trail down Piney Branch Parkway and we are finishing up a feasibility study for a new cross trail along Military Rd Northwest with our partners at D dot. As part of that project, we hope to go into designing construction in the next few years.

0:47:41.260 --> 0:47:57.300

Bartolomeo, Nick

And we will be looking at improving the trail that exists parallel to beach Dr just north of Military Rd up to Bingham Drive, which is currently being rebuilt. So equity is a big component of what we are doing.

0:47:58.870 --> 0:47:59.260

Bartolomeo, Nick

So.

0:48:1.490 --> 0:48:3.120

Bartolomeo, Nick

The next one is uh.

0:48:3.900 --> 0:48:7.550

Bartolomeo, Nick

So what? So you're decision was made without up-to-date traffic data.

0:48:9.420 --> 0:48:17.390

Washburn, Julia L

Still on, as I said late in the process, we received up-to-date traffic data from D dot.

0:48:18.70 --> 0:48:33.940

Washburn, Julia L

And and D dot in that in that traffic analysis which we got too late to include into the EA, which was already getting edited and turned into 508 compliance et cetera.

0:48:34.480 --> 0:49:3.910

Washburn, Julia L

And dot study actually says that they are in favor of a a seasonal closure because when they did the first study, they did not take into consideration changes that they have now made to Georgia Ave, Connecticut Ave and 16th St and so I encourage you to take a look at that.

0:49:4.540 --> 0:49:34.350

Washburn, Julia L

Because at first, the first study said that they could accommodate, and the second study said that that there were very they have a lot of concerns, so they they did change their posture and in the second study we had been moving toward the hour of preferred alternative prior to that. But when we got that study, we were clearly.

0:49:35.310 --> 0:49:36.100

Washburn, Julia L

A little bit.



0:49:46.660 --> 0:49:46.960

Stidham, Tammy  
Yeah.

0:49:37.880 --> 0:49:58.960

Washburn, Julia L

Well, we were concerned because we're D dot felt that they could help manage the traffic impacts in the first study they went they they now feel because of all the changes that have made been made on the other roads that it it would be harder to do so and there would be significant backups on other roads.

0:50:4.450 --> 0:50:4.840

Washburn, Julia L

Please.

0:50:0.450 --> 0:50:26.950

Bartolomeo, Nick

Hey, Julia, would you mind if I read the the conclusion from that report? It says the recommendation this is from D dot is to limit the closure of Upper Beach drive from either Memorial Day to Labor Day or when schools are not in session. Traffic volumes are lowered during this time of year, which should allow less impacts to the roadway network. The other option is to limit the closure to the mid day time period, but this could increase MPS's daily operational efforts and may affect the Rock Creek Park users.

0:50:27.570 --> 0:50:41.200

Bartolomeo, Nick

For knowing the hours that traffic would be allowed on Upper Beach Drive, this recommendation provides a balance of providing additional accessibility to Rock Creek Park when it is most utilized with minimizing the impacts to surrounding neighborhoods.

0:50:45.810 --> 0:50:47.190

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK. Next question.

0:50:48.50 --> 0:50:52.160

Bartolomeo, Nick

Uh, who exactly made the proposal to reopen Beach Drive for most of the year?

0:50:53.680 --> 0:50:55.650

Bartolomeo, Nick

Questions about transparency.

0:50:57.440 --> 0:51:17.40

Bartolomeo, Nick

I I'm sorry, this is a little little difficult to follow. Are the elected officials? If so, who elects them? My elected officials requested that beach dry remain closed to vehicles. Montgomery County Council also asked the beach Dr Remain closed to vehicles. Why has NPS proposed over ruling these elected officials preferences?

0:51:18.950 --> 0:51:52.400

Washburn, Julia L

Well, as I said before, we had to look at a variety of issues, not just the recreational use, but we we are seriously concerned about our habitat for our amphipods and other species. And we're also concerned about forest fragmentation. And right now, before we can do further analysis.

0:51:52.480 --> 0:52:22.830

Washburn, Julia L

And put in mitigation measures, we feel that the road being open part of the year helps to discourage that impact into our endangered species areas. Now we when we do work with fish, Fish and Wildlife service to adequately mitigate all of the impacts that are happening.

0:52:22.930 --> 0:52:27.200

Washburn, Julia L

To our threaten and endangered species habitats.

0:52:27.610 --> 0:52:34.540

Washburn, Julia L

And you know things, you know, we we will monitor and we will see if there are any changes.

0:52:34.920 --> 0:52:40.90

Washburn, Julia L

And I also you know part while we certainly take.

0:52:40.800 --> 0:52:47.610

Washburn, Julia L

Seriously, the advice from our City Council.

0:52:56.610 --> 0:52:56.910

Stidham, Tammy

You know.

0:52:48.730 --> 0:53:5.720

Washburn, Julia L

Congresswoman Norton, mayor's office, etcetera. We we can't. It's not a it's not a the decision is not a decision that's made in the Court of public opinion. The Park Service has to take into consideration.

0:53:7.370 --> 0:53:37.180

Washburn, Julia L

Everybody's need all different kinds of uses of the park as well as all the things we talked about at the beginning, which includes accessibility for people with disabilities, which includes natural and cultural resources, and also looks at the balance of visitor use. So we don't necessarily make decisions based on what.

0:53:37.290 --> 0:53:54.480

Washburn, Julia L

Public officials ask us to do we make decisions based on our best judgment at the time it what is best for park resources and also provides for a mixture of uses.

0:53:57.450 --> 0:54:28.340

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia. Ohh next one is what kind of park with roads does not provide safe walking and biking? Rock Creek Park is one of the largest herds of urban parks. And why should it be designed mainly for cars and not for walkers and bikers? Think Central Park in New York City are Griffith Park in LA, where cars are carefully routed away from pedestrians, bicyclists and nature. So Julie, if you don't mind, I'll just take that and expand a little bit about the little on what I said earlier regarding the additional new trails that are in the coming and in the planning stages.

0:54:30.60 --> 0:54:31.120

Bartolomeo, Nick

We just finished.

0:54:45.990 --> 0:54:46.230

Stidham, Tammy

Right.

0:54:31.790 --> 0:54:49.720

Bartolomeo, Nick

A 15 year effort with or we're finishing a 15 year effort with our partners at D dot to rebuild and reconstruct the multi use trail with new connections and a lot of places including a brand new pedestrian bridge South of the zoo tunnel to make riding much safer through that section of the park.

0:54:50.980 --> 0:55:19.410

Bartolomeo, Nick

And as I mentioned, we're looking at a new trail for military Rd and we are considering you know how we're going to improve the trail that it does exist north of military or and there is a trail north of Military Rd runs all the way down to Oregon Ave cuts down military Rd and goes north Up Beach Drive to Bingham Drive where it goes ahead, heads West on Bingham Drive and reconnects. So there is a lot that we are doing to keep people safe. We also have more than 30 miles of official trails in the park.

0:55:19.810 --> 0:55:33.830

Bartolomeo, Nick

Horse trails, foot trails in addition to the paved trails for people to use. So there are a lot of ways to get around Rock Creek Park and certainly we want to keep people as safe as possible. So.

0:55:34.730 --> 0:55:36.950

Bartolomeo, Nick

In any case, anything you want to add to that one Julia.

0:55:37.850 --> 0:56:6.100

Washburn, Julia L

I would just also add that beach Dr was originally envisioned as a a road for pleasure driving and certainly it was never to be considered as a commuter route. And you know that is definitely an issue. The city honestly has grown up around Rock Creek Park since we've been here since 1890.

0:56:6.520 --> 0:56:8.560

Washburn, Julia L

And and.

0:56:9.500 --> 0:56:43.550

Washburn, Julia L

You know that scenic driving is still some people really still really value the scenic driving. And for some people the only way that they can see the most beautiful part of the park, which we we feel is the gorge there along Rock Creek and Boulder Bridge, people have shared with us through public comments that the only way they can get there is on a vehicle in a vehicle and that they would feel excluded from the most beautiful part of the park.

0:56:43.990 --> 0:57:0.660

Washburn, Julia L

If they could not get there via a vehicle, so again it's we do have many, many miles of trails we have read just refurbished the multi use trail that goes all the way.

0:57:0.750 --> 0:57:11.370

Washburn, Julia L

And you know from Peace St all the way up to Broad Branch Rd we are we have projects developed and submitted for funding.

0:57:11.970 --> 0:57:41.470

Washburn, Julia L

And for I'm completely rebuilding all the trail, the paved trails in the northern part of the park as well. So we hope to get that accomplished. So there are many, many ways that you can use the park, in fact more ways that you can use the park for recreation and then you can for driving. But some people do find that the driving is an important part of their recreational experience.

0:57:43.130 --> 0:57:53.60

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia. So oil and gas deposits on the roads don't seep into the Creek with increased use of cars. And I'll take that, Julia. It does happen, absolutely.

0:57:54.400 --> 0:58:1.80

Bartolomeo, Nick

But the way that that you you should look at it or can at least consider it is that if you push the cars outside of Rock Creek.

0:58:2.310 --> 0:58:32.220

Bartolomeo, Nick

On most of those roadways that are that are outside of Rock Creek are within Rock Creek drains, so if anything goes on the roads outside of Rock Creek then it's it's gonna come back to Rock Creek one way or the other into a tributary that feeds Rock Creek or into Rock Creek itself. And they're plus it's there's a lot of other runoff for that comes from Montgomery County into Rock Creek. So changing the traffic in and out of the park, it will have an imperceptible.

0:58:32.760 --> 0:58:36.60

Bartolomeo, Nick

In fact, on water quality in the park and a water quality in Rock Creek.

0:58:38.30 --> 0:59:5.320

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK. Could NPS explain further the proposal to open Ross Dr Under all components of alternatives to and three, what are any of the negatives and keeping raw strive close to vehicles for those times when it was proposed to open Beach Drive to vehicles between Joyce and Broad Road and Broad Branch A closed Ross Dr at times would provide bicyclists and walkers a parallel route to get to between these two. Excuse me, these two points that would be largely vehicle free.

0:59:7.820 --> 0:59:9.90

Washburn, Julia L

Nick, can you answer that one?

0:59:9.620 --> 0:59:32.190

Bartolomeo, Nick

Yeah, it's, it's it's certainly, you know a a, a good point and you know Ross, Dr is is a twisty windy Rd with limited sight distance. So we understand and that's something that I think is a comment please submitted when into the official comments and we will certainly look at that and consider it.

0:59:32.710 --> 0:59:33.50

Washburn, Julia L

Umm.

0:59:32.990 --> 0:59:33.460

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm.

0:59:34.410 --> 0:59:57.280

Bartolomeo, Nick

Well, Boulder Bridge be harmed from having 10s of thousands more cars to drive on top of it every every day. Well, I'll take that, Julia. The the bridge was reconstructed. Not the bridge superstructure, but the roadway itself was reconstructed three years ago. Two years ago when Beach Dr was redone. I can't remember now. So it's there's no evidence that's being harmed.

0:59:58.120 --> 0:59:58.570

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm.

1:0:0.750 --> 1:0:1.950

Bartolomeo, Nick

Give me just a moment, OK?

1:0:5.360 --> 1:0:8.730

Bartolomeo, Nick

Alright, why just a seasonal closure, not a full time closure?

1:0:10.520 --> 1:0:14.930

Washburn, Julia L

And once again, we are striking a balance here.

1:0:15.390 --> 1:0:23.130

Washburn, Julia L

And we have also received information from D dot that they are very concerned about a full time closure.

1:0:23.440 --> 1:0:26.210

Washburn, Julia L

And also I.

1:0:28.380 --> 1:0:31.460

Washburn, Julia L

I'm sorry, can you read the question one more time? I think I lost my train of thought.

1:0:31.870 --> 1:0:35.580

Bartolomeo, Nick

No worries. Why just a seasonal closure and not a full time closure?

1:0:40.190 --> 1:0:40.440

Stidham, Tammy

You know.

1:1:0.590 --> 1:1:0.840

Stidham, Tammy

It.

1:0:35.600 --> 1:1:5.430

Washburn, Julia L

Oh yeah. Yeah. So we do honor the fact that people would like to have more time on on a car, free Rd for recreating. And so I said, as I said before, we are trying to strike some sort of balance there where we are taking into consideration peoples need for more outdoor recreation space. We're also.

1:1:5.540 --> 1:1:14.240

Washburn, Julia L

Trying to honestly preserve our endangered species until we can put better mitigation.

1:1:31.870 --> 1:1:32.390

Stidham, Tammy

You know.

1:1:14.560 --> 1:1:45.70

Washburn, Julia L

And and modifications in there. And we do feel that having cars on the road discourages people from cutting up and down between beach Drive and 16th St and we're OK with doing that during the summer when leaf is out, when leaf out is happening because it's harder to cut through then. And so you know, we're trying to manage for natural resources.

1:1:49.330 --> 1:1:49.740

Stidham, Tammy

Yeah.

1:1:45.410 --> 1:1:49.880

Washburn, Julia L

We are also trying to manage for safety, US Park Police have.

1:1:49.970 --> 1:1:56.120

Washburn, Julia L

And have concerns really about the road being closed in terms of their?

1:1:56.600 --> 1:2:2.350

Washburn, Julia L

And ability to respond their response times as well as.

1:2:3.80 --> 1:2:3.370

Stidham, Tammy

Yeah.

1:2:2.450 --> 1:2:11.480

Washburn, Julia L

And Fire and Rescue having access. So you know there are a number of various different things to take into consideration.

1:2:23.100 --> 1:2:23.390

Stidham, Tammy

Hello.

1:2:15.780 --> 1:2:37.370

Bartolomeo, Nick

Julia, you talked a little bit about this already, but unofficial trails versus cars seems like a small con versus a mascon. Can you explain more and how does more cars equal less use of unofficial trails when the allowance of cars drive more people off the previously closed road and into the woods? And Julie, if you don't mind, I'll take that so.

1:2:36.540 --> 1:2:37.430

Washburn, Julia L

Yeah, please do.

1:2:38.460 --> 1:3:9.270

Bartolomeo, Nick

So Julia mentioned something about this earlier and this is part of why we chose summer as the time when folks could get on to beach driving cars. Would, you know, be blocked? And we've, we've made some progress in the last seven or eight years in managing deer at Rock Creek Park and Deer, one of the major reasons why we didn't have an understory for those of you who have been around for some time like me, you can remember a time before deer when Rock Creek had understory growth. And in a lot of places you couldn't even see through the woods.

1:3:10.400 --> 1:3:40.770

Bartolomeo, Nick

We're going to get that back as we continue deer management and you know, we move towards more healthy forests ecosystem and in the summer time as we get more of that growth back as we have more under stories, we have leaves on the trees, it discourages people from going into the woods and creating social trails. And I can say that my staff and I, we have 120 plus years of experience in Rock Creek Park. All of us have been here at this park as our primary park for some time.

1:3:40.990 --> 1:4:11.410

Bartolomeo, Nick

And we have seen degradation in the forest over the last couple of years that, you know, is is astonishing. You have in the EA a map that shows the amount of social trails, unofficial trails that are being cut through the park all the time. And these trails fragment force habitat. They trample sensitive plants. You have animals like the migratory ovenbird that nest on the ground, people walking through the forest, releasing their dogs off leash, having tremendous.

1:4:11.500 --> 1:4:39.450

Bartolomeo, Nick

Impact on the integrity of the force. Rock Creek is one of the largest forest blocks in the District of Columbia. It has very precious resources that are worth saving, worth protecting and so that way if we have people on the beach drive when it's most most difficult to get into the forest to cause social trails to use social trails, to have dogs off of lease, it's the best time.

1:4:40.460 --> 1:4:47.50

Bartolomeo, Nick

And it's the most protective time for the forest resources. So, Julia, anything you wanna add to that?

1:4:48.480 --> 1:5:2.530

Washburn, Julia L

No, I mean, that's our best judgment at this moment in time. And I will just add that we are looking at adaptive management and so we move through addressing some of these issues.

1:5:2.960 --> 1:5:16.70

Washburn, Julia L

And we, you know, we can either expand the recreational time open, that is where the where we have no cars or we can contract it depending on how.

1:5:16.580 --> 1:5:22.840

Washburn, Julia L

And how you know how we're doing with our endangered species management and.

1:5:26.660 --> 1:5:27.10

Stidham, Tammy

Yeah.

1:5:23.130 --> 1:5:42.550

Washburn, Julia L

And you know, a variety of other aspects that we can monitor. So it, like I said, it's adaptive



management. So we're not opposed to changing the decision in the future based on good data and we will be developing a lot of monitoring protocols that will allow us to collect that data.

1:5:43.790 --> 1:5:56.200

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you. Have you considered extending and fixing the multi use trail as part of this plan? And and Julie, I think we talked about that earlier, we are looking at that very seriously especially north of of Joyce Rd military Rd.

1:5:56.620 --> 1:6:26.310

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm and. But I do wanna stress that we have some as Julie and I have talked about earlier, some very, very sensitive resources along Beach Drive through the center part of the park around the Rapids and north of there and it's highly unlikely that in the areas where we have no separated trails now paved trail now that we would in the future because there is an environmental impact to putting new trails into a park again you fragment forest you.

1:6:26.510 --> 1:6:30.320

Bartolomeo, Nick

No, it you cause roots for invasive to come into the park you create.

1:6:30.420 --> 1:6:45.150

Bartolomeo, Nick

You know, put up in previous surface it's it's not without consequences. So that's why we're not looking at extending the multi use trail network anymore than it already is in those areas because we have to protect our resources.

1:6:46.670 --> 1:6:47.190

Bartolomeo, Nick

All right.

1:6:49.540 --> 1:6:54.390

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK, so if the parks already has a preferred alternative, why are you still taking public comments?

1:6:55.720 --> 1:6:56.450

Washburn, Julia L

OK.

1:6:57.900 --> 1:7:20.310

Washburn, Julia L

Because the public input process is very important to the decision making process and we really do want to know what people think and the ideas that they have to share and and you know, we took all all of the comments that we received into serious consideration we received I think.

1:7:21.260 --> 1:7:40.740

Washburn, Julia L

4100 discrete comments and we heard from people who have a whole range of opinions and concerns and ideas, and we seriously considered all of those in looking into this and getting to this point.

1:7:41.390 --> 1:7:55.220

Washburn, Julia L

And now we have the public comment period which which we will we read and analyze and analyze and and we will have have all the comments actually.

1:7:55.660 --> 1:8:5.970

Washburn, Julia L

Umm, evaluated using social science research, coding and analysis and we are looking for from you.

1:8:7.670 --> 1:8:12.200

Washburn, Julia L

Things we missed. Uh, things, ideas we didn't consider.

1:8:13.920 --> 1:8:19.390

Washburn, Julia L

Various points of view on things and we will seriously take them into consideration.

1:8:20.810 --> 1:8:26.780

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia. Tammy, this may be for you. Will the comments in this chat also be preserved as part of the public meeting record?

1:8:29.270 --> 1:8:45.420

Stidham, Tammy

Uh, no, the the the questions are being preserved as part of the public meeting record, but not all the various comments we are calling all of the questions from the chat as the they keep coming in but not the comments themselves.

1:8:46.850 --> 1:8:47.260

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you.

1:8:48.60 --> 1:9:19.670

Bartolomeo, Nick

Page 52 of the EA is a map of unofficial trails that is clear that they're concentrated near Carter Barren area, where there are no official trails and so let me just say that there is an official trail on Carter Barren. It runs down behind Picnic Grove 24. This is part of the historic minimization of access from the east side of the park. Why not create a few official trails in that area to eliminate the need for the unofficial trails and Julie, I'll give that to you after I mentioned something to begin with. It's like I said earlier, this is one of Julia's top priorities and we certainly are working on projects for that.

1:9:19.750 --> 1:9:36.200

Bartolomeo, Nick

But the geology geography is challenging in that area and doing new trails down some of those hillsides

is is difficult. It could be really impactful, especially when we need to be making them accessible for all. So Julie, is there anything that you want to add to that?

1:9:36.890 --> 1:9:40.380

Washburn, Julia L

And I will just say that we already have an official trail.

1:9:41.380 --> 1:10:0.40

Washburn, Julia L

And we also have a couple of the social order, quote, desire trails that have been used for years. And so we are considering formalizing some of those trails as well to create more of them.

1:10:0.440 --> 1:10:15.250

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. And that will be in an attempt A to. You know, one of my one of my highest priorities is access from the east side of the park and equitable access for all and.

1:10:16.250 --> 1:10:23.500

Washburn, Julia L

And we are working on that in a number of ways as as, as as Nick mentioned, we will have a new paved.

1:10:24.680 --> 1:10:34.100

Washburn, Julia L

A multi-purpose trail parallel to Piney Branch, which will which will be a new access point from the east.

1:10:34.560 --> 1:10:49.60

Washburn, Julia L

And we are doing a feasibility study right now for a trail about a hiker, biker, multipurpose trail paved going from parallel to military Rd.

1:10:49.480 --> 1:10:52.380

Washburn, Julia L

Umm. From the east to the West and vice versa.

1:10:52.910 --> 1:11:15.850

Washburn, Julia L

And we are looking at in addition to trying to do a better job marking and putting signage on all of our official trails, we are also considering formalizing one or two of the social trails on the east side, which we hope will help people stop making their own trails.

1:11:16.350 --> 1:11:36.640

Washburn, Julia L

And and we are taking another another bunch of other measures we are putting in. We have designed and we are working on funding right now a whole new set of signs for the park including very welcoming.

1:11:37.340 --> 1:11:44.610

Washburn, Julia L

Uh signs at the trail heads of all of the trails, but especially the ones on the east side.

1:11:45.180 --> 1:11:51.820

Washburn, Julia L

And and we are looking at and will be implementing in the next year or two.

1:11:52.940 --> 1:12:0.970

Washburn, Julia L

New trail sign directional trail signs for the official trails and and and I will just say very bluntly.

1:12:3.20 --> 1:12:27.720

Washburn, Julia L

You know, we are having very significant problems right now with forest fragmentation and soil compaction and wildlife disturbance and opportunity creating better opportunities for invasive plant invasion because people are going anywhere they want.

1:12:28.470 --> 1:12:29.970

Washburn, Julia L

In the in the forest.

1:12:30.270 --> 1:12:45.110

Washburn, Julia L

And and they are not staying on trail and they are not keeping their dogs on leash. So this is a huge concern for us and this was something that we took very seriously and considering our current preferred alternative.

1:12:46.900 --> 1:13:16.240

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia and I said also point out that we do have people who are actually vandalizing those areas that we have closed already on the Western Ridge Trail. We put up numerous signs that says social trails are closed because we went in there and we worked to close them and somebody spray painted all of them in places like Pinehurst, we've had people just steal the signs or bend them in half. It's very discouraging. So it's a real problem. People need to stay on the official trails in Rock Creek. That is the law and the regulation.

1:13:17.270 --> 1:13:35.960

Bartolomeo, Nick

Next question is, was it ever considered to extend the weekend closures to include Fridays? So it is open to traffic four days a week and close for three days. If it was considered, why did it not end up in in any of the proposed alternative next steps? And Julie, I can just take that real quick and then you can add to it. I think there was concern about.

1:13:36.660 --> 1:14:6.740

Bartolomeo, Nick

Messaging and you know the patterns that would develop if we, you know, had it open Monday through Thursday and then a weekday like Friday, it was all of a sudden closed. It's difficult for cars and bikers and others to adjust. But again, it's a good comment and we do have adaptive management and like Julia mentioned, we will be monitoring. We will be looking at our resources and we'll be looking at this

plan as it's implemented. And we'll consider changes and adjustments in the future. Julia, anything to add?

1:14:7.680 --> 1:14:13.870

Washburn, Julia L

I would just add that it is counterintuitive, right to think that.

1:14:14.170 --> 1:14:18.490

Washburn, Julia L

At cars on Beach Dr actually help the forest, right?

1:14:18.770 --> 1:14:45.520

Washburn, Julia L

And and I and eventually that, you know, that could be true. Like I said, we have to take measures to protect that part of the forest, between Beach Drive and 16th St and at the moment it is the IT is our feeling that the the people who drive on Beach Drive.

1:14:45.960 --> 1:15:5.110

Washburn, Julia L

And create a deterrent for people to cut down from the 16th St side to try to get to Beach Drive for recreation. So that may change as we work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on.

1:15:5.490 --> 1:15:35.450

Washburn, Julia L

And on a recovery plans for our threatened and endangered species, this is our this is our thinking at the moment and I do realize it is counterintuitive. Why would cars be better for the park? And that is counterintuitive. And ultimately I think we can get there. But right now we are experiencing some serious resource management concerns regarding.

1:15:35.640 --> 1:15:43.770

Washburn, Julia L

Forest and habitat, and so that is the point of view that we're taking at this moment in time.

1:15:45.660 --> 1:15:49.280

Bartolomeo, Nick

To Julia, how about the impact of commuter traffic on Maryland streets?

1:15:52.450 --> 1:16:0.310

Bartolomeo, Nick

So like if it what's the impact on on Maryland streets from any of our referral alternatives, did we look at any of our alternatives? Did we look at that?

1:16:2.620 --> 1:16:8.810

Washburn, Julia L

I didn't, you know, Maryland Department of Transportation did not weigh in on this.

1:16:10.770 --> 1:16:23.330

Washburn, Julia L

You know, we've been working with the District Department of Transportation and so also we did not hear much from the folks in Maryland during the scoping process.

1:16:25.440 --> 1:16:55.470

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia. The next one, I think it's directed at me. Nick, I'm confused. Are you saying that bringing cars back to the park will help the health of the trails? What are you getting at? So as we explained earlier, it is part of our approach now to allow people to have beach Dr Open for recreation when we believe it will do the least damage to the adjacent forest. And as Julie and I have been stressing, it's very important to protect forest habitat and the creatures and plants.

1:16:55.530 --> 1:16:56.900

Bartolomeo, Nick

Animals that live there.

1:16:58.580 --> 1:17:21.990

Bartolomeo, Nick

So again, we'll be looking at adaptive management and that that gets to the next question, which is whatever is decision, will it be final or it will be evaluated periodically and that goes back to the adaptive management approach to Julia mentioned right now with all the stressors, we call them that are on the park from deer to invasive plants to storm waters to recreationists to using the park in ways that are not.

1:17:22.680 --> 1:17:50.390

Bartolomeo, Nick

Good. You know, not healthy for the environment, not healthy for the forest causes a lot of problems and we all want to have a part that we can have in the future ten, 1520 years from now. So yes, for right now this is the best approach to protecting the forest health in the park and it will be looked at on a regular basis. And as Julie mentioned, we'll be able to do management adjustments.

1:17:52.320 --> 1:17:52.730

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm.

1:17:53.970 --> 1:17:58.420

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK. The next one is the same repeat of that. How how would adding cars stop?

1:17:59.500 --> 1:18:1.530

Bartolomeo, Nick

That the social trails.

1:18:2.530 --> 1:18:3.300

Bartolomeo, Nick

Uh.

1:18:5.210 --> 1:18:7.580

Bartolomeo, Nick

Sorry, I'm trying to run down this list here real quick.

1:18:14.600 --> 1:18:19.160

Bartolomeo, Nick

OK. How many comments were in favor of closing year round and did it even matter?

1:18:22.930 --> 1:18:23.420

Washburn, Julia L

And.

1:18:24.490 --> 1:18:57.820

Washburn, Julia L

We did, you know, first of all, I will say that this is not a vote we take considerate, we take all comments into consideration. But as National Park Service managers, we have to take into consideration multiple points of view and we also have to take into consideration what we think at the moment is best for the resources in the park. But I will tell you and you can see it if you go into the EA and look at the summary of the scoping.

1:18:58.90 --> 1:19:13.690

Washburn, Julia L

Comments. There were more people who wanted it closed than people who wanted it open. There were also quite a few constructive ideas in there that helped us look at various different alternatives.

1:19:16.320 --> 1:19:24.450

Bartolomeo, Nick

Would NPS preferred that nobody visit the park ever outside of a vehicle? And would NPS prefer they just bulldoze the whole park and turn it into an Expressway?

1:19:26.130 --> 1:19:39.720

Washburn, Julia L

Absolutely not. And that's, I'm sorry, but that's a sarcastic question. No, our number one, number one priority is resource preservation and visitor use.

1:19:40.610 --> 1:19:44.100

Washburn, Julia L

We feel that this choice at the moment.

1:19:45.30 --> 1:19:48.740

Washburn, Julia L

Is the best choice for both of those things.

1:19:49.490 --> 1:19:52.150

Washburn, Julia L

And as I said before.

1:19:53.670 --> 1:20:23.560

Washburn, Julia L

Our job is to preserve and protect this forest and also manage so that visitors can enjoy it. There are lots and lots of ways that you can enjoy the park, which is 1700 acres with miles and miles of paved and non paved and horse trails.

1:20:24.280 --> 1:20:34.240

Washburn, Julia L

All through it, there are lots of ways you can enjoy it. You will also be able to enjoy it on weekends and on holidays.

1:20:35.80 --> 1:21:5.470

Washburn, Julia L

And during the whole summer, so there's, you know, we are we are taking a step in the direction of moving toward full closure. We in our professional opinion and based on our analysis which is very clearly outlined in the EA, we don't feel it is at the right time right now to close it 100% and we have not received.

1:21:5.670 --> 1:21:35.270

Washburn, Julia L

The support from DDOT necessary to I mean in terms of their most recent recent studies, they are backtracked and they are not able. They're saying they are not able to mitigate the impacts to traffic on other roadways and in communities. We did here, along with a lot of comments for keeping it closed full time. We also heard a lot of concerns from.

1:21:35.680 --> 1:21:49.260

Washburn, Julia L

The local communities about traffic being driven into their communities, safety issues in their communities and we have to take all of that under consideration.

1:21:51.50 --> 1:22:9.990

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia. How about making all of the 16th St Northwest entrances safe? There aren't even sidewalks on Joyce Rd. For example, if I can take that Julia as part of the feasibility study that we're doing right now, we are looking, of course, at a trail that runs along Joyce Rd in parallel to military Rd.

1:22:11.410 --> 1:22:37.30

Bartolomeo, Nick

The feasibility study, which will come out soon, does recommend that we look at other areas of Joyce Rd like that run close to the golf course and we are looking at improving access off of 16th St along Joyce Rd as part of the Golf course rehabilitation. So there are a couple things in the works there to improve access off of 16th St and 16th St Corridor including as Julia mentioned earlier, the Piney Branch Parkway Trail.

1:22:37.920 --> 1:22:38.350

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm.



1:22:40.190 --> 1:22:40.780

Bartolomeo, Nick  
OK.

1:22:41.920 --> 1:22:43.340

Bartolomeo, Nick  
Talked about Ross drive.

1:22:49.140 --> 1:22:54.850

Bartolomeo, Nick  
Ah, let's see here. Wouldn't keeping the road completely closed prevents soil compaction?

1:22:58.340 --> 1:22:58.790

Washburn, Julia L  
And.

1:22:59.650 --> 1:23:32.420

Washburn, Julia L  
It depends on the way you look at it. If the road is completely closed, obviously the people using the road will not be creating soil compaction. However, again, and I realize this sounds counterintuitive, what we're seeing as a result of having beach Dr Closed is that it is encouraging a lot more of cutting through the forest. Between Beach Drive and 16th St and we are having a very difficult time.

1:23:32.540 --> 1:23:47.130

Washburn, Julia L  
Managing a visitor behavior in that area, we are going to be embarking on a visitor management study which will help us mitigate those problems and we will be doing that in the next year.

1:23:48.490 --> 1:24:14.980

Washburn, Julia L  
So as I said, some of the issues that are of concern to us or the forest and for the wildlife, we may be able to work through in the next year or two, which is why we're going to take an adaptive management approach where we can change our minds in the future and either expand or contract as needed. The use of the road.

1:24:17.110 --> 1:24:47.620

Bartolomeo, Nick  
When will the Piney Branch Parkway construction be finished, or when will it likely be open to cars again? For people in Upper Northwest DC east of 16th St, How can we Access Rock Creek Parkway and Julia? I'll take that dot just started the reconstruction process. DDOT is actually building helping us build that multi use trail along Pony Ranch Parkway. They just started it last week I believe. And so the first thing they're gonna do is rebuild a stork wall and fix a big hole in the wall.

1:24:47.720 --> 1:24:59.260

Bartolomeo, Nick  
Just along the trail. And then they'll build the new trail that's gonna take three months. And at the time, after three months, the park, the roadway will be reopened and the trail will be open for users.

1:25:0.520 --> 1:25:1.10

Bartolomeo, Nick

Umm.

1:25:2.160 --> 1:25:13.30

Bartolomeo, Nick

All right, let's see here. Just summarizing this one, since we're running out of time education about social trails and an inclusive process where considering trail additions would be more relevant.

1:25:14.210 --> 1:25:24.920

Bartolomeo, Nick

And and the the the commoner said earlier, if closing the road to card is not the actual cause of increase in social trails, then opening the road to cards won't help them. So Julia, what are we doing to educate folks about social trails?

1:25:25.530 --> 1:25:55.90

Washburn, Julia L

So we've been working really hard on that and we're very pleased to have our partners, the Rock Creek Conservancy, helping us. We have been doing a social media campaign and it started at the beginning of COVID. It's called recreate responsibly. You may have seen some of the signs we've put up about keeping dogs on leash, about staying on trails. These are all sort of yard sign, temporary signage they often have.

1:25:55.480 --> 1:26:1.630

Washburn, Julia L

The pictures on them and it and try to explain why these rules are in place.

1:26:2.80 --> 1:26:15.930

Washburn, Julia L

And and so we're working hard on that. It's not effective, it's not working. And we are also going to be working, as I said on.

1:26:16.210 --> 1:26:46.840

Washburn, Julia L

A A visitor use management study, which will include social science researchers in the process of helping us try to find some ways to help people pay attention to the rules in the park. It is extremely difficult to get people to follow the rules and we do not have Park Police capacity.

1:26:47.100 --> 1:27:0.990

Washburn, Julia L

To be enforcing these types of resource preservation rules, Park Police is of course, very much focused on crime and preventing crime.

1:27:1.480 --> 1:27:31.980

Washburn, Julia L

And but in terms of resource preservation, they don't have enough people. They don't have enough capacity for that. So we've got to look at another method for enforcement. And this is a quandary. And I

would very much welcome comments from the public on ideas for trying to get folks to love the park and use the park but use it responsibly.

1:27:32.160 --> 1:27:49.110

Washburn, Julia L

So that we will continue to have a park in the future. We are also working on in collaboration with our great partners at the Rock Creek Conservancy, a long term forest management plan that will look at.

1:27:50.500 --> 1:28:3.330

Washburn, Julia L

But making sure that the forest is resilient to climate change, that's going to take a lot of people and a lot of work. And it's gonna take the public participating in helping with that.

1:28:3.950 --> 1:28:12.490

Washburn, Julia L

And and so that is another planning process that we will we are embarking on and you know stay tuned for more on that.

1:28:13.190 --> 1:28:44.960

Bartolomeo, Nick

And Julia, let me just add one more thing, if I could. We're almost at a time, but I just like to mention the when we're talking about social trails and educating and and help we have a volunteer group as well aside from the Conservancy called the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and they have helped us for decades on trail maintenance free of charge. These are volunteers that help maintain those official trails that everybody uses out there. They've been helping us with social trail closures and have offered to help us with social trail closures in the future. So both the Conservancy and PTC have been good partners in this.

1:28:45.860 --> 1:28:52.80

Bartolomeo, Nick

One final question. Since we're out of time, but I think it's important, when will the final decision be made and announced?

1:28:54.460 --> 1:29:8.860

Washburn, Julia L

OK, we're not sure because it depends on how many comments we get and how long it takes to analyze them and then incorporate the them into the final decision making process so.

1:29:9.20 --> 1:29:40.580

Washburn, Julia L

And you know, the comment period ends on August 11th. I encourage you to put all of your ideas and comments. I've I'm only able to monitor the chat a little bit and I know there are a lot of comments in the chat. Please put those into the official comment website and also or send them to us at the park. And you know, if we have thousands of comments.

1:29:40.900 --> 1:30:0.430

Washburn, Julia L

It may take us some time to analyze those, so no decision will be made until the final analysis of all the

public comments have been taken into consideration. So that could be early September, but it more likely might be in October.

1:30:0.850 --> 1:30:10.140

Washburn, Julia L

And so we will continue to keep the road closed until a final decision document is signed.

1:30:12.740 --> 1:30:34.80

Washburn, Julia L

I also just I know we're running late. I also just wanted to answer one question that I have seen repeatedly come up in the chat about accessibility. And I just want to say that we received, as you know about 4100 comments in scoping period and we heard from members of the disability community.

1:30:34.670 --> 1:31:3.30

Washburn, Julia L

And some who really felt that keeping the road closed made it more accessible for them, with people with mobility impairments. We also heard from some who said this will make it impossible if you close the road for them to get to the most beautiful parts of the park and please leave it open. So again, we're trying to strike a balance.

1:31:4.440 --> 1:31:9.10

Washburn, Julia L

There in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities.

1:31:10.260 --> 1:31:10.940

Bartolomeo, Nick

Thank you, Julia.

1:31:11.20 --> 1:31:15.90

Bartolomeo, Nick

That we're at 803, Tammy. We're at time turning it back to you.

1:31:20.150 --> 1:31:50.20

Stidham, Tammy

OK. Thank you, Nick and Julia. So much. And I'm hoping that I have enough Internet to close this out here again. Thank you everyone for participating this evening. We ended up with over 200 people participating and again as a reminder on how to comment, you can see on the screen the online form for entering comments directly into our public engagement website as well as the US mail address for hardcopy mails.

1:31:50.210 --> 1:31:51.940

Stidham, Tammy

Which will also be folded in.

1:31:53.320 --> 1:31:56.150

Stidham, Tammy

The comment period ends on August 11th.

1:31:57.230 --> 1:32:28.980

Stidham, Tammy

And so if you're sending by US mail, please be sure that they are postmarked by that date for consideration. As Julia mentioned during the meeting, all of the comments will be evaluated, analyzed and folded into our decision making process, and we will try to keep everyone up to date through our website on our schedule as things move forward. Again, we thank you for your participation tonight. The video should be up from this meeting sometime tomorrow.

1:32:29.430 --> 1:32:34.900

Stidham, Tammy

And please let us know if you have questions. In the meantime, have a good evening.