

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.

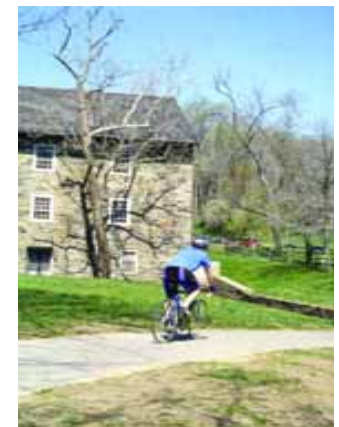


Table 1: Summary of Management Prescriptions

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	<p>Include in the Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone.</p> <p>Continue weekend closures of sections of this road.</p> <p>Allow automobile travel along the length of Beach Drive on weekdays, but at reduced speeds.</p>	<p>Include in the Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone.</p> <p>Continue weekend closures of sections of this road.</p> <p>Allow automobile travel along the length of Beach Drive on weekdays using current management techniques.</p>	<p>Include northern portions in the Valley Floor Nonmotorized Recreation Zone. Permanently close this zone to motorized vehicles and manage for non-motorized recreation.</p> <p>Include the remainder in the Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone. Allow automobile travel, but encourage slower speeds and fewer nonrecreational vehicles.</p>	<p>Include northern portions in the Valley Floor Mid-Weekday Recreation Zone.</p> <p>Between rush-hours on weekdays, close this zone to motorized vehicles and manage for nonmotorized recreation.</p> <p>Except during mid-weekday closures, allow automobile travel along the length of Beach Drive on weekdays, but encourage slower speeds.</p> <p>Continue weekend closures of sections of this road.</p>
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway	<p>Continue rush-hour lane reversals.</p> <p>Upgrade the paved recreational trail.</p> <p>Improve the intersection of the parkway with Beach Drive near Connecticut Avenue.</p>	<p>Continue current traffic management policies.</p> <p>Provide maintenance as needed.</p>	<p>End lane reversals and allow two-way traffic at all times.</p> <p>Implement high-occupancy vehicle restrictions in the primary direction of travel during rush-hours.</p> <p>Upgrade the paved recreational trail.</p> <p>Improve the intersection of the parkway with Beach Drive near Connecticut Avenue.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>
Other park roads	<p>Rehabilitate or construct paved recreational trails adjacent to roads.</p>	<p>Continue current management practices.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>
Paved recreation trails	<p>Upgrade about 10 miles of trails and construct up to 1.75 miles of new trails.</p>	<p>Maintain trails and provide rehabilitation of deteriorated trail segments.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>
<u>Interpretation and Education</u>				
Peirce Mill complex	<p>Include in the Cultural Resource Zone.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Include in the Visitor Facility Zone.</p> <p>Rehabilitate the mill to focus on history of milling and land use in the Rock Creek area.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>

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-Klinglet 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-Klinglet 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-Klinglet 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.

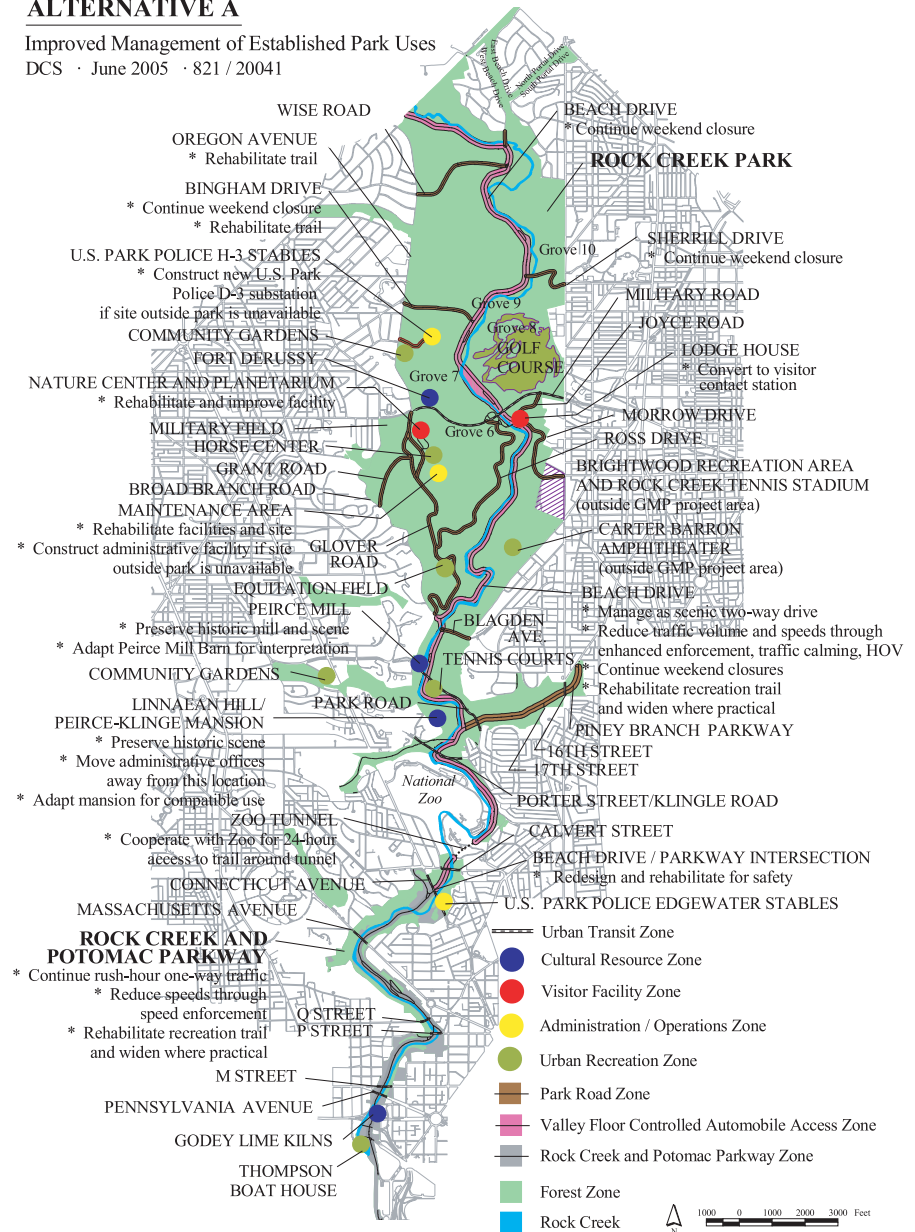
Alternative A would improve traffic management within the park and parkway. The existing park roadway system would be retained and nonrecreational through-traffic would be accommodated. However, to improve visitor safety and the quality of the visitor's experience, traffic speeds and volumes would be 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

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Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action

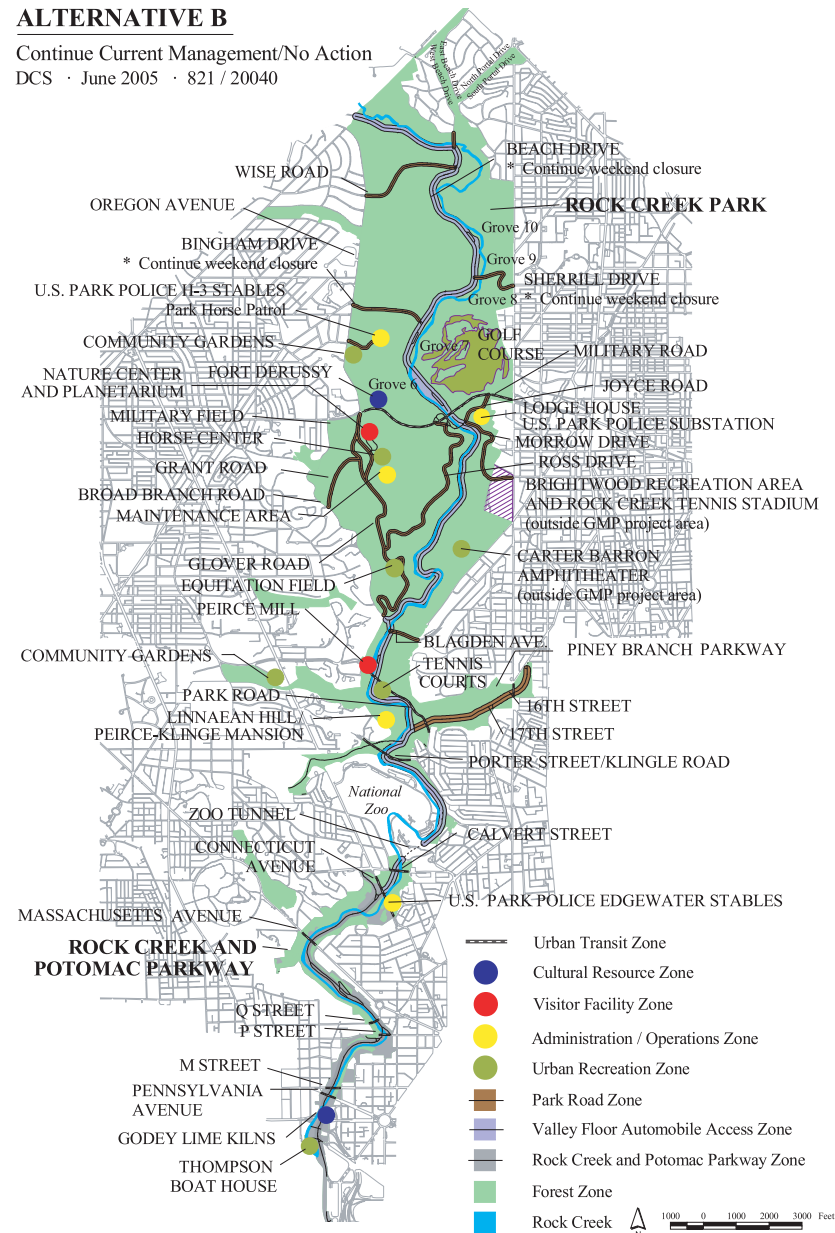
Alternative B would continue the current management pattern into the future. It represents the “no action alternative” required by implementation guidelines for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Key features of this alternative are included in Table 2 and the Alternative B map.

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
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Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis

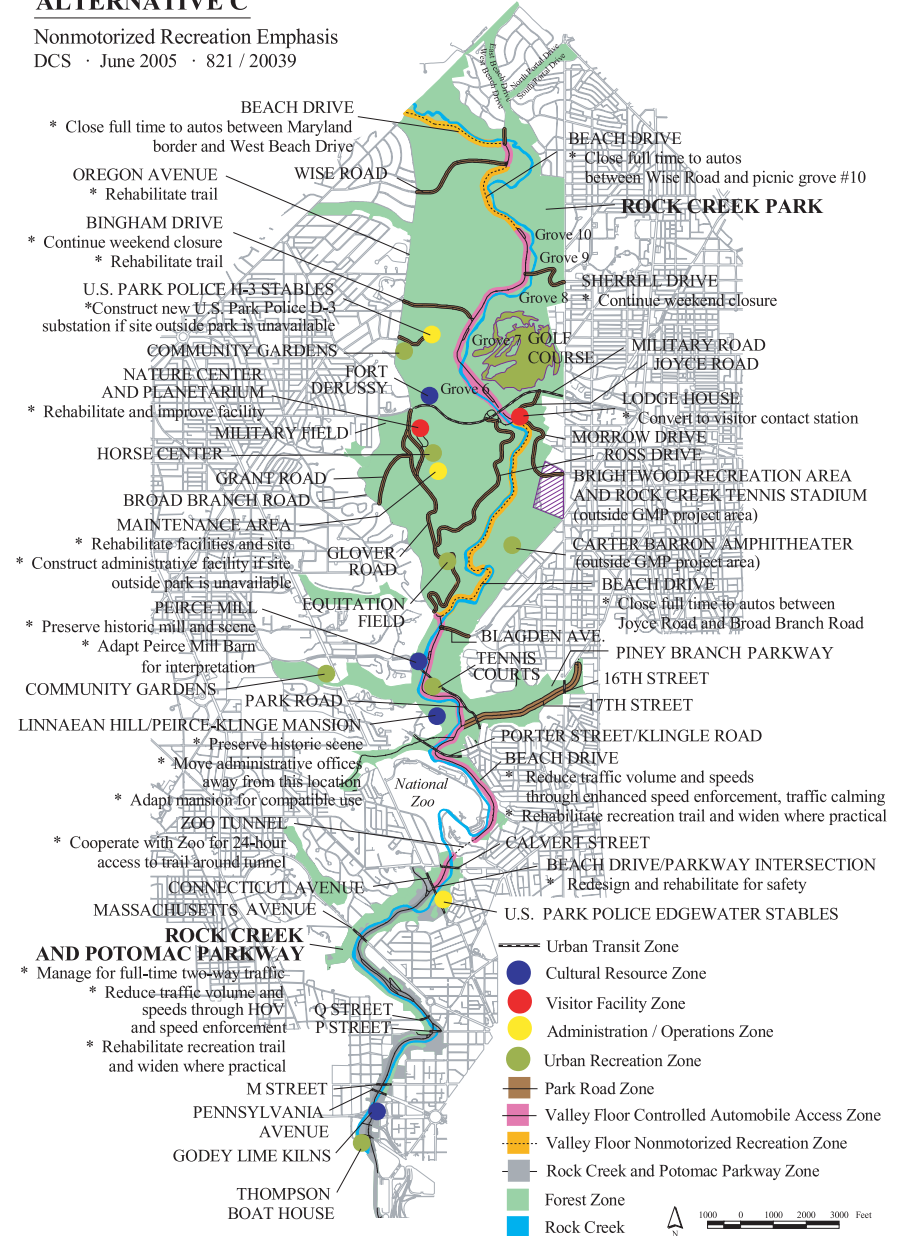
Alternative C would promote nonmotorized recreation throughout the week. This alternative would eliminate traffic in much of the park north of Broad Branch Road by closing three sections of Beach Drive to automobiles. These would be the same three segments that currently are closed on weekends and holidays. 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.

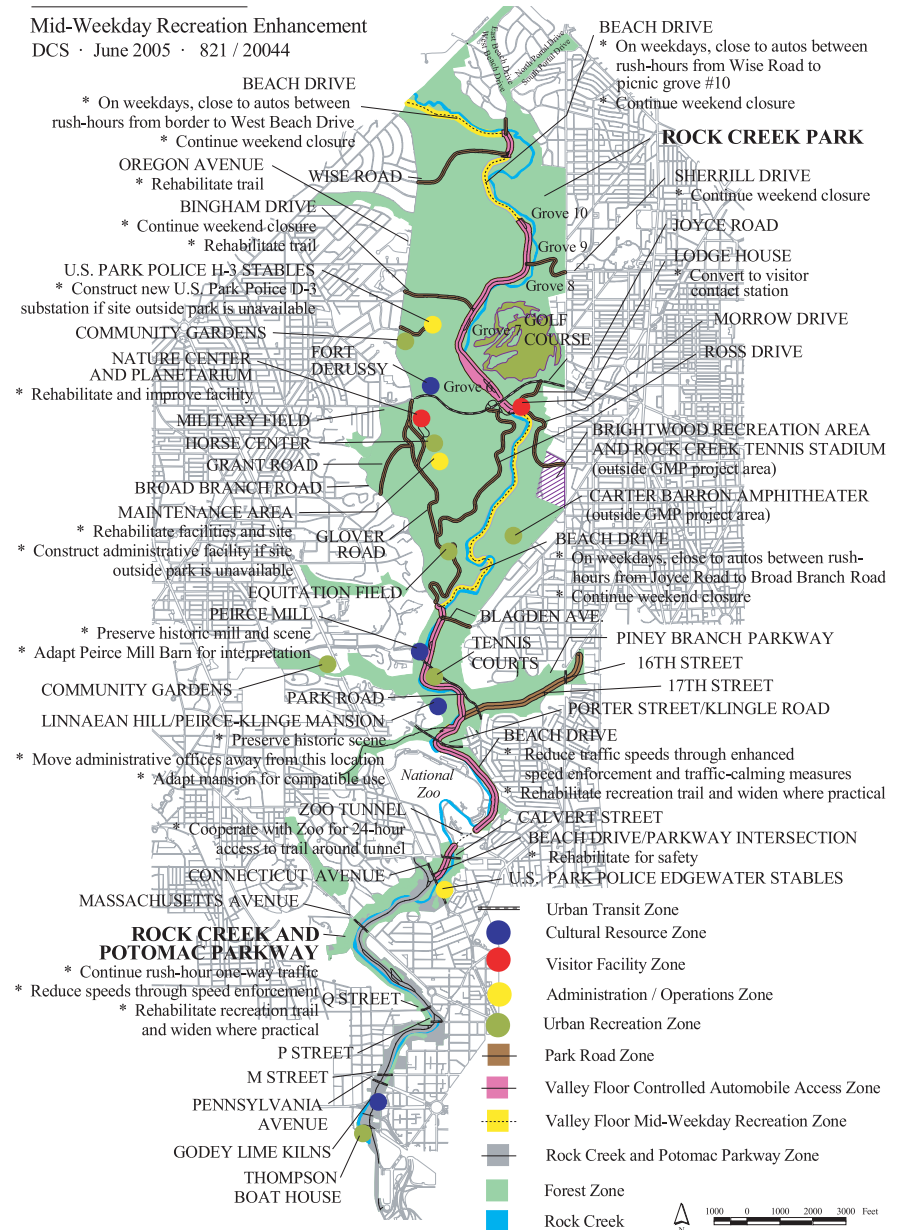
Alternative D was intended as a compromise between traffic and nonmotorized recreation. During rush-hour periods, the alternative would attempt to facilitate traffic flows and minimize the diversion of rush-hour traffic from the park into nearby neighborhoods. Between rush-hour periods on weekdays, it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

