

Volume 1  
Final  
General Management Plan  
Environmental Impact Statement

**ROCK CREEK PARK  
AND THE  
ROCK CREEK AND  
POTOMAC PARKWAY**

**Washington, D.C.**

# CONTENTS

## Purpose of and Need for Action

Purpose of the General Management Plan	1
Need for the General Management Plan	4
Park History and Use Relative to Management Planning	5
Geographic Area Covered by the General Management Plan	10
Planning Direction or Guidance	11
Park Mission	11
Mission Goals	13
Special Mandates and Administrative Commitments	14
Servicewide Mandates and Policies	14
Planning Opportunities and Issues	29
Decision Points	29
Alternatives or Actions Eliminated from Further Study	32
Impact Topics - Resources and Values at Stake in the Planning Process	38
Impact Topics Dismissed from Further Consideration	43
Connected, Cumulative, and Similar Actions	45

## Alternatives

Management Prescriptions	51
Forest Zone	52
Desired Visitor Experience	52
Desired Resource Conditions	56
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	56
Cultural Resource Zone	56
Desired Visitor Experience	57
Desired Resource Conditions	57
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	57
Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone	57
Desired Visitor Experience	57
Desired Resource Conditions	58
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	58
Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone	58
Desired Visitor Experience	58
Desired Resource Conditions	58
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	58
Valley Floor Nonmotorized Recreation Zone	59
Desired Visitor Experience	59
Desired Resource Conditions	59
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	59
Valley Floor Mid-Weekday Recreation Zone	59
Desired Visitor Experience	59
Desired Resource Conditions	60
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	60
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Zone	60
Desired Visitor Experience	60
Desired Resource Conditions	60
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	61
Park Road Zone	61
Desired Visitor Experience	61
Desired Resource Conditions	61
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	61

Visitor Facility Zone	62
Desired Visitor Experience	62
Desired Resource Conditions	62
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	62
Urban Recreation Zone	62
Desired Visitor Experience	62
Desired Resource Conditions	63
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	63
Administration/Operations Zone	63
Desired Visitor Experience	63
Desired Resource Conditions	63
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	64
Urban Transit Zone (Non-NPS Roads)	64
Desired Visitor Experience	64
Desired Resource Conditions	64
Appropriate Kinds of Activities or Facilities	64
Formulation of Alternatives	65
Public Input and the Development of Alternatives A, B, and C	65
Formulation of Alternative D	66
Formulation of the NPS' Final Preferred Alternative	67
Mitigation	68
The Preferred Alternative	69
The Environmentally Preferred Alternative	71
Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	73
Concept	73
Management Prescriptions	74
Forest Zone	74
Cultural Resource Zone	77
Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone	78
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Zone	79
Park Road Zone	80
Visitor Facility Zone	80
Urban Recreation Zone	81
Administration/Operations Zone	81
Urban Transit Zone	84
Summary of Trail Improvements	84
Costs	86
Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	89
Concept	89
Management Prescriptions	89
Forest Zone	89
Cultural Resource Zone	89
Valley Floor Automobile Access Zone	90
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Zone	90
Park Road Zone	90
Visitor Facility Zone	93
Urban Recreation Zone	93
Administration/Operations Zone	93
Urban Transit Zone	94
Costs	94

Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis	95
Concept	95
Management Prescriptions	96
Forest Zone	96
Cultural Resource Zone	96
Valley Floor Nonmotorized Recreation Zone	99
Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone	99
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Zone	101
Park Road Zone	102
Visitor Facility Zone	102
Urban Recreation Zone	102
Administration/Operations Zone	103
Urban Transit Zone	103
Summary of Trail Improvements	103
Costs	103
Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement	105
Concept	105
Management Prescriptions	109
Forest Zone	109
Cultural Resource Zone	109
Valley Floor Controlled Automobile Access Zone	110
Valley Floor Mid-Weekday Recreation Zone	111
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Zone	111
Park Road Zone	112
Visitor Facility Zone	112
Urban Recreation Zone	112
Administration/Operations Zone	113
Urban Transit Zone	113
Summary of Trail Improvements	113
Costs	113
Summary of Alternatives	115

## **Affected Environment**

Natural Resources	131
Air Quality	131
Regional Compliance with Air Quality Standards	131
Carbon Monoxide Monitoring Results in 2001 and 2002	132
Year 1996 Air Quality Evaluation for Rock Creek Park	133
Rock Creek and Its Tributaries	134
Watershed Overview	134
Sewers and Outfalls	135
Water Quality Standards	136
Rock Creek Water Quality	136
Wetlands and Floodplains	140
Wetlands	141
Floodplains	141
Deciduous Forests	142
Protected and Rare Species	144
Federal- and State-Listed Amphipods	144
Other State-Listed Species	145
Other Native Wildlife	146
Terrestrial Wildlife	146
Aquatic Wildlife	148

Non-Native Terrestrial Animals	148
Roadkill	149
Cultural Resources	154
Archeological Resources	154
Historic Resources and Cultural Landscapes	155
Visitor and Community Values	159
Traditional Park Character and Visitor Experience	159
Recreation Opportunities	159
Visitor Profile	161
Visitation Trends and Visitor Services	162
Noise	163
Access	163
Public Health and Safety	164
Traffic Safety	164
Crime	170
Evacuation of the City during a Major Emergency	170
Regional and Local Transportation	171
Regional Traffic Flows	171
Local Traffic Flows	172
Mass Transportation	178
Nonmotorized Transportation Flows	178
Community Characteristics	179
Metropolitan Washington, D.C.	180
Surrounding Neighborhoods and Zip Code Tabulation Areas	180

### **Environmental Consequences**

Environmental Impacts of Alternative A: Improved Management of Established Park Uses	185
Impacts on Air Quality	185
Regulations and Policy	185
Methodology	185
Analysis	190
Cumulative Impacts	190
Conclusions	192
Impacts on Rock Creek and Its Tributaries	192
Regulations and Policy	192
Methodology	192
Analysis	193
Cumulative Impacts	195
Conclusions	196
Impacts on Wetlands and Floodplains	197
Regulations and Policy	197
Methodology	197
Analysis	198
Cumulative Impacts	199
Conclusions	199
Impacts on Deciduous Forests	199
Regulations and Policy	199
Methodology	200
Analysis	201
Cumulative Impacts	203
Conclusions	203
Impacts on Protected and Rare Species	203
Regulations and Policy	203
Methodology	204
Analysis	204

Cumulative Impacts	205
Conclusions	205
Impacts on Other Native Wildlife	205
Regulations and Policy	205
Methodology	206
Analysis	206
Cumulative Impacts	208
Conclusions	209
Impacts on Archeological Resources	210
Regulations and Policy	210
Methodology	210
Analysis	210
Cumulative Impacts	211
Conclusions	212
Impacts on Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes	212
Regulations and Policy	212
Methodology	212
Analysis	212
Cumulative Impacts	213
Conclusions	213
Impacts on Traditional Park Character and Visitor Experience	213
Regulations and Policy	213
Methodology	213
Analysis of Effects on Continuation and Quality of Traditional Park Uses	215
Analysis of Effects on Visitor Recreational Opportunities	217
Analysis of Effects on Access for Visitors with Impaired Mobility	219
Cumulative Impacts	219
Conclusions	219
Impacts on Public Health and Safety	220
Regulations and Policy	220
Methodology	220
Analysis of Effects on Safety along Roadways	220
Analysis of Effects on Personal Safety	224
Analysis of Effects on Emergency Evacuations	225
Cumulative Impacts	225
Conclusions	225
Impacts on Regional and Local Transportation	225
Regulations And Policy	225
Methodology	225
Analysis	228
Cumulative Impacts	231
Conclusions	231
Impacts on Community Character	232
Regulations and Policy	232
Methodology	232
Analysis	233
Cumulative Impacts	233
Conclusions	234
Sustainability and Long-Term Management	234
The Relationship between Local Short-Term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity	234
Any Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources that Would Be Involved Should the Alternative Be Implemented	234
Any Adverse Impacts that Cannot Be Avoided Should the Action Be Implemented	235
Environmental Impacts of Alternative B: Continue Current Management/No Action	236

Impacts on Air Quality	236
Analysis	236
Cumulative Impacts	236
Conclusions	236
Impacts on Rock Creek and Its Tributaries	237
Analysis	237
Cumulative Impacts	237
Conclusions	237
Impacts on Wetlands and Floodplains	237
Analysis	237
Cumulative Impacts	238
Conclusions	238
Impacts on Deciduous Forests	238
Analysis	238
Cumulative Impacts	238
Conclusions	238
Impacts on Protected and Rare Species	239
Analysis	239
Cumulative Impacts	239
Conclusions	239
Impacts on Other Native Wildlife	239
Analysis	239
Cumulative Impacts	240
Conclusions	240
Impacts on Archeological Resources	240
Analysis	240
Cumulative Impacts	241
Conclusions	241
Impacts on Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes	241
Analysis	241
Cumulative Impacts	241
Conclusions	241
Impacts on Traditional Park Character and Visitor Experience	241
Analysis of Effects on Continuation and Quality of Traditional Park Uses	241
Analysis of Effects on Visitor Recreational Opportunities	242
Analysis of Effects on Access for Visitors with Impaired Mobility	243
Cumulative Impacts	243
Conclusions	243
Impacts on Public Health and Safety	244
Analysis of Effects on Safety along Roadways	244
Analysis of Effects on Personal Safety	244
Analysis of Effects on Emergency Evacuations	244
Cumulative Impacts	244
Conclusions	244
Impacts on Regional and Local Transportation	244
Analysis	245
Cumulative Impacts	245
Conclusions	246
Impacts on Community Character	246
Analysis	246
Cumulative Impacts	246
Conclusions	246
Sustainability and Long-Term Management	246
The Relationship between Local Short-Term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity	246

Any Irreversible or Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources that Would Be Involved Should the Alternative Be Implemented 247  
Any Adverse Impacts that Cannot Be Avoided Should the Action Be Implemented 247

#### Environmental Impacts of Alternative C: Nonmotorized Recreation Emphasis 248

Impacts on Air Quality 248

Analysis 248

Cumulative Impacts 248

Conclusions 249

Impacts on Rock Creek and Its Tributaries 249

Impacts on Wetlands and Floodplains 249

Impacts on Deciduous Forests 249

Impacts on Protected and Rare Species 249

Impacts on Other Native Wildlife 250

Impacts on Archeological Resources 250

Impacts on Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes 250

Analysis 250

Cumulative Impacts 250

Conclusions 250

Impacts on Traditional Park Character and Visitor Experience 251

Analysis of Effects on Continuation and Quality of Traditional Park Uses 251

Analysis of Effects on Visitor Recreational Opportunities 252

Analysis of Effects on Access for Visitors with Impaired Mobility 253

Cumulative Impacts 254

Conclusions 254

Impacts on Public Health and Safety 254

Analysis of Effects on Safety along Roadways 254

Analysis of Effects on Personal Safety 257

Analysis of Effects on Emergency Evacuations 257

Cumulative Impacts 257

Conclusions 257

Impacts on Regional and Local Transportation 257

Analysis 257

Cumulative Impacts 271

Conclusions 272

Impacts on Community Character 272

Analysis 272

Cumulative Impacts 275

Conclusions 276

Sustainability and Long-Term Management 276

The Relationship between Local Short-Term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity 276

Any Irreversible or Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources that Would Be Involved Should the Alternative Be Implemented 276

Any Adverse Impacts that Cannot Be Avoided Should the Action Be Implemented 276

#### Environmental Impacts of Alternative D: Mid-Weekday Recreation Enhancement 278

Impacts on Air Quality 278

Analysis 278

Cumulative Impacts 278

Conclusions 279

Impacts on Rock Creek and Its Tributaries 279

Impacts on Wetlands and Floodplains 279

Impacts on Deciduous Forests 279

Impacts on Protected and Rare Species 279

Impacts on Other Native Wildlife 280



Impacts on Archeological Resources	280
Impacts on Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes	280
Impacts on Traditional Park Character and Visitor Experience	280
Analysis of Effects on Continuation and Quality of Traditional Park Uses	280
Analysis of Effects on Visitor Recreational Opportunities	282
Analysis of Effects on Access for Visitors with Impaired Mobility	283
Cumulative Impacts	283
Conclusions	284
Impacts on Public Health and Safety	284
Analysis of Effects on Safety along Roadways	284
Analysis of Effects on Personal Safety	286
Analysis of Effects on Emergency Evacuations	286
Cumulative Impacts	286
Conclusions	286
Impacts on Regional and Local Transportation	286
Analysis	286
Cumulative Impacts	289
Conclusions	290
Impacts on Community Character	290
Analysis	290
Cumulative Impacts	290
Conclusions	290
Sustainability and Long-Term Management	291
The Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity	291
Any Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitments of Resources that Would Be Involved Should the Alternative Be Implemented	291
Any Adverse Impacts that Cannot Be Avoided Should the Action Be Implemented	291

### **Consultation and Coordination**

History of Public Involvement	293
List of Preparers	296
Planning Team	296
Rock Creek Park	296
Denver Service Center (DSC)	296
National Capital Regional Office	296
U.S. Park Police	297
Consultants	297
Parsons	297
Rock Creek Park	297
Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc.	297
List of Recipients	297

## **Bibliography, Index, and Appendixes**

Bibliography 303

Index of Key Words 318

Appendix A: Legislation 330

Appendix B: Laws and Executive Orders 334

Appendix C: Relationship of the General Management Plan to Other Planning Efforts 337

Appendix D: Letter from the Mayor of the District of Columbia Requesting Another Alternative 344

Appendix E: Federal and State-Listed Special-Concern Species 346

Appendix F: National Register of Historic Places Properties 371

Appendix G: Comparison of Impacts of Alternatives on Traffic, Based on Modeling 372

Appendix H: Summary of Traffic Modeling Methodology 377

## **TABLES**

- 1: Criteria Used to Establish Each Impact Topic 39
- 2: Summary of Management Prescriptions 53
- 3: Advantages of the Action Alternatives 70
- 4: Management Prescription Zoning under Each Alternative 74
- 5: Estimated Costs of Implementing the Alternatives 87
- 6: Summary of Key Differences among the Alternatives 117
- 7: Summary of Impacts of the Alternatives 121
- 8: Carbon Monoxide National Ambient Air Quality Standards and Values for Washington, D.C., 2001 – 2002 133
- 9: Recorded Roadkills in and adjacent to Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, 1991 through 2000 149
- 10: Roadkills Recorded on Beach Drive in 2000 150
- 11: Roadkills Recorded on the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway in 2000 150
- 12: Locations of Recorded Roadkills for Four Species, 1991 through 2000 151
- 13: Summary of Traffic Accidents in Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, 1993 through 1995 and 2001 through 2003 165
- 14: Summary of Traffic Accidents on Beach Drive Segments North of Broad Branch Road, 2001 to 2003 168
- 15: Accident Rates for the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Beach Drive, and Washington, D.C. 170
- 16: Personal Crime Totals for Police Districts 2, 3, and 4 in Washington, D.C., 1999-2003 171
- 17: Average Mid-Day and Daily Traffic Volumes for Neighborhood Roads North of Rock Creek Park in 2003 178
- 18: General Characteristics of the Populations of Washington, D.C. surrounding Rock Creek Park by Zip Code Tabulation Area 182
- 19: General Characteristics of the Populations of Maryland Communities near Rock Creek Park by Zip Code Tabulation Area 184
- 20: Air Quality Impact Evaluation Based on Estimated Maximum-Hour Carbon Monoxide (CO) Concentrations in 2020 191
- 21: Relative Advantages of the Alternatives with Regard to Visitor Recreational Opportunities on Weekdays 218
- 22: Level-of-Service Characteristics of Urban and Suburban Arterials 227
- 23: Average Daily Traffic under Alternative C Compared to Average Daily Traffic under Alternative B in the Year 2020 258

- 24: Beach Drive and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Segments Experiencing Noticeable or Greater Changes in Traffic Levels of Service between Alternative C and Alternative B 263
- 25: Other Road Segments Experiencing Noticeable or Greater Changes in Traffic Levels between Alternative C and Alternative B 265
- 26: Zip Code Tabulation Areas Experiencing Noticeable or Greater Changes in Community Characteristics Associated with Traffic between Alternative C and Alternative B 274
- 27: Maximum Hourly Volume of Traffic that Would Be Diverted by Alternative D Road Closures by Road Segment in the Year 2020 287
- 28: Traffic Impact Summary for Alternative D in the Year 2020 288

## **FIGURES**

- Region 6
- Existing Conditions 7
- Rock Creek Watershed 17
- Alternative A 75
- Alternative B 91
- Alternative C 97
- Alternative D 107
- Sewerlines and Outfalls 137
- Average Weekday Traffic Volumes 173
- Alternative A and B Year 2020 Average Weekday Volumes 187
- alternative C Year 2020 Average Weekday Traffic Volumes 259
- Alternative C Year 2020 a.m. Peak-hour Volume Changes with Respect to Alternative B 267
- Alternative C Year 2020 p.m. Peak-hour Volume Changes with Respect to Alternative B 269