

DC DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



Rock Creek Park  
Washington, DC

# **Restoration of Unnamed Tributary to Broad Branch** *Rock Creek Park*

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**February 2012**

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

The District Department of the Environment (DDOE) and the National Park Service (NPS) have prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate alternatives for the restoration of an unnamed tributary to Broad Branch in Washington, DC. This document has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. DDOE and NPS have conducted consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in coordination with this EA.

An administrative unit of the National Park System, Rock Creek Park is located in the Northwest quadrant of Washington, DC. The park's main section is a largely wooded valley stretching from the Maryland state line south to the National Zoological Park, with associated tributaries and upland areas. The two-mile long Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway runs south of the National Zoological Park to its southern terminus at Virginia Avenue, NW. The park also encompasses several stream valley parks, including Glover Archbold Park, as well as portions of the Civil War Defenses of Washington (Fort Circle Parks).

### PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

DDOE and the NPS, as co-lead agencies, propose to restore approximately 1,600 linear feet of an unnamed tributary to Broad Branch. It is located just upstream of 36th Street to just upstream of the crossing on Broad Branch Road, NW across the street from the entrance to the Embassy of the Ivory Coast. The tributary drains into the approximately 170-acre Broad Branch watershed and currently is piped beneath property owned by the NPS and the District of Columbia (District). The Broad Branch watershed is a highly urbanized sub-watershed of Rock Creek located in Washington, DC.

The purpose of the project is to remove a portion of the stream that was piped underground in 1937 and restore it to its historic channel, a process known as "daylighting;" help process and remove pollutants from the stream by exposing it to sunlight, air, soil, and vegetation; and reduce nutrient and sediment pollution from erosion caused by fast-flowing stormwater and non-point source pollution by increasing groundwater infiltration and creating meanders and floodplain wetlands.

The project is needed because fast free-flowing stormwater has caused erosion of gullies located on Peruvian Embassy property, which have eroded the banks of the unnamed tributary and have caused sedimentation to occur. This has destabilized the surrounding environment, reduced infiltration of water into underlying aquifers, and compromised wildlife habitat. Because the unnamed tributary to Broad Branch is not conveyed through a healthy stream, piped stormwater is not treated for pollutants, nor harnessed before it enters Broad Branch. Without intervention, fast stormwater flows would continue to degrade and pollute these resources.

## OVERVIEW OF THE ALTERNATIVES

This EA analyzes the no action alternative, Alternative 1, along with two alternatives for the daylighting and restoration of the unnamed tributary to Broad Branch. The difference in the action alternatives is the extent and length of restoration of the stream. Under Alternative 2, the full restoration alternative, approximately 1,600 linear feet of stream would be daylighted and restored with associated stormwater wetlands and regenerative step-pools for additional stormwater management. Under Alternative 3, the partial restoration alternative, approximately 400 linear feet of stream would be daylighted and restored. No stormwater wetlands are proposed to be constructed under this alternative.

Alternative 2 is the Preferred Alternative. The restoration of 1,600 linear feet of the stream would provide the largest beneficial impacts. Alternative 2 would best protect, preserve, and enhance cultural and natural resources. Daylighting the stream would improve water quality at the location and downstream by exposing water to sunlight, air, soil, and vegetation, all of which help process and remove pollutants. Furthermore, restoring the stream would reduce erosion caused by fast-flowing stormwater and lower the amount of nutrient and sediment pollution that is entering the stream. This reduction would be achieved by creating meanders and floodplain wetlands.

## HOW TO COMMENT

To comment on this EA, you may mail comments or submit them online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ROCR> and follow the appropriate links. Please be aware that your comments and personal identifying information may be made publicly available at any time. While you may request that NPS withhold your personal information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Please mail comments to:

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