



Envision the Future of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Visitor Use Management Plan - Scoping Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (the park) and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River are developing a Visitor Use Management Plan (the plan). The purpose of the plan is to maximize the ability of the National Park Service (NPS) to provide recreational access while protecting the park's natural and cultural resources. Natural resources include the plant and animal communities, and cultural resources include culturally and historically important structures and areas. In April, the park held a series of listening sessions, focus group meetings, and an online comment period to gather input and learn about our visitors and what is important to them. That input was used to develop a list of possible management strategies that the park could take to help balance visitor use and resource protection.

We want to hear from you again. This is a really important plan for the future of the park and we need your help! The NPS would like your feedback during project scoping, a process used to ask for public input. Scoping activities will include holding public meetings and providing opportunities for you to offer your thoughts on the possible management strategies for the plan. The planning process will examine current and potential visitor opportunities and will develop long-term strategies for providing recreational opportunities, connecting visitors to important experiences, and managing visitor use. An integral part of the planning process is getting your input. We want to gain a better understanding of our visitors and their needs, experiences, and preferences. Your feedback will help us identify management strategies for recreation and visitor use opportunities while achieving our mission to preserve and protect resources.

At this time, we want to share our progress with you and get your opinions on some of the ideas that have been

developed. Your comments will help us improve these ideas and guide the planning team in developing more specific and detailed planning alternatives. The park will host several open house meetings and one online webinar where you can learn about, discuss, and comment on the possible management strategies. In addition to the open house meetings, presentations and other materials will be posted online so you can provide feedback. The formal comment period will begin on September 8 and end on October 9. You can find more information, submit comments, and get project updates at <http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa>. You can also find updates and general information about the planning effort through the park website (<http://www.nps.gov/dewa/getinvolved/index.htm>) and Facebook - www.facebook.com/DelWaterGapNPS.

As we explore different ways to manage the park for the future, I encourage you to stay connected and be an active participant in this important planning process. In this newsletter, you will find a number of ways to contact us and access information. With your continued help, we will develop a plan that provides visitors with exceptional opportunities to experience the park while protecting its extraordinary resources and values.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the development of the Visitor Use Management Plan. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

John J. Donahue
Superintendent

WHY IS A VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT PLAN NEEDED?

Today the park receives about 4.5 to 5 million visitors per year. This is about twice as many visitors per year as in 1987 when the General Management Plan was completed. Given these changes, updated guidance for providing visitor opportunities and protecting resources is needed. The Visitor Use Management Plan is needed to assess the appropriateness of current and new/evolving visitor opportunities and experiences while considering visitor safety, visitor experiences, and resource protection. The plan will provide specific and up-to-date direction on visitor management and strategies for resource protection within the context of today's visitor use patterns and resource conditions. The planning process creates an opportunity for the park to take a comprehensive look at managing visitor use on a park-wide level.



Canoeists enjoying a day on the River



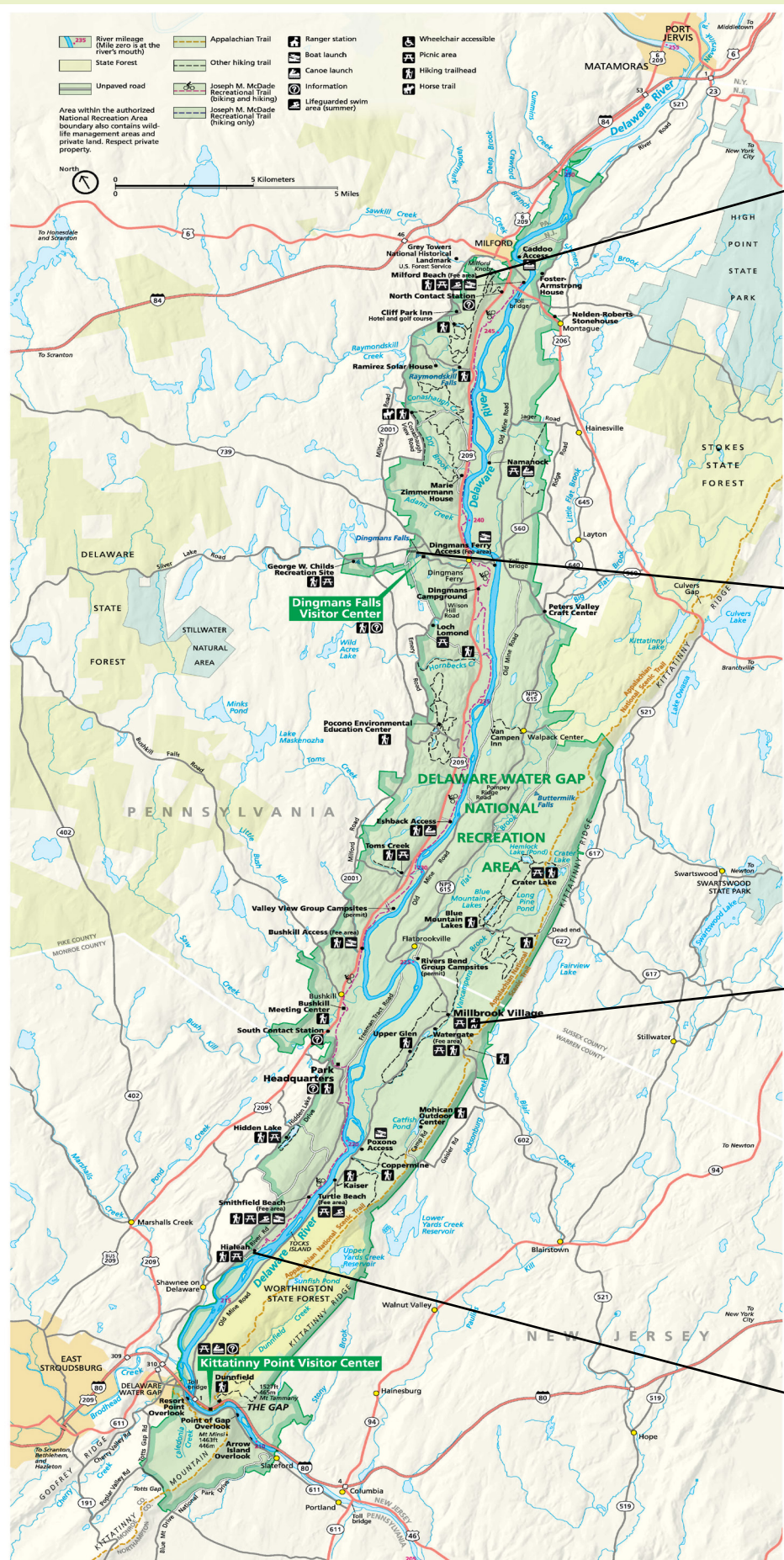
Trash removed during a river cleanup

GOALS OF THE PLAN

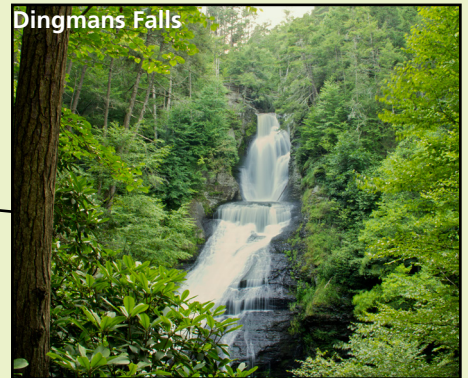
The overall goal for visitor use management is to maximize the ability of the NPS to provide outstanding recreational opportunities while protecting fundamental resources and values. This plan will update the park's General Management Plan by including a revised set of goals and desired conditions for specific areas of the park. These updated goals and desired conditions will be available for public review in the draft Visitor Use Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

ISSUES THE PLAN WILL ADDRESS

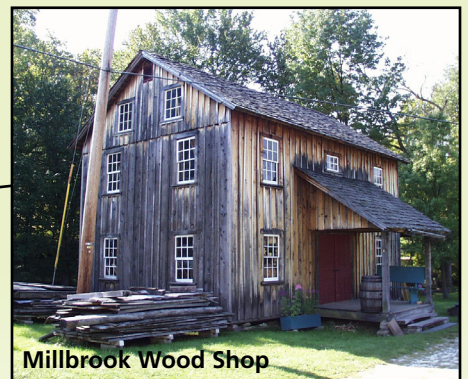
NPS has identified several key issues and opportunities that will be addressed through this planning process. Some of the key issues include user-created trails and unauthorized trail uses such as biking on hiking only trails. There have been conflicts between users groups on trails, at canoe and boat ramps, and at day-use sites. Some of the conflicts are the result of crowding at popular destinations. Visitors are looking to find places to recreate away from the crowds yet some of the less-developed and sensitive natural areas are not compatible with high levels of use. As visitation throughout this large park increases, public safety continues to be an important consideration. Inappropriate or unsafe activities, as well as illegal activities such as vandalism, graffiti, and looting to historic buildings and natural areas are occurring throughout the park, and it is difficult for the NPS to be present in remote areas. Through this planning process, the NPS is looking for opportunities to improve response to these management challenges. This plan will allow the park to create a healthy balance for visitors to enjoy the beauty of the park and for the natural environment to thrive. These issues and opportunities demonstrate the need for the park to develop management strategies to reduce visitor conflicts, provide safe access and recreational opportunities, and protect natural and cultural resources.



Milford Beach



Dingmans Falls



Millbrook Wood Shop



Hialeah Picnic Site

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATIONS

In April, the NPS held meetings and received comments during a civic engagement process as an initial step in the development of the Visitor Use Management Plan for the park. The purpose of these meetings was to gain a better understanding of our visitors and their needs, experiences, and preferences and to help us identify existing or new opportunities to meet those needs while also achieving our mission to preserve and protect resources. The civic engagement meetings hosted over 100 community members and public participants as well as 74 stakeholder organizations. In addition to input at meetings, 258 letters were received on the park planning website from interested members of the public from across the country.

We encourage future participation to continue our conversation about the park resources, challenges, and opportunities ahead for Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River. In addition to public scoping, there will be other opportunities to provide additional input in the future. You can find out more and get project updates at (<http://www.nps.gov/dewa/getinvolved/index.htm>), (www.parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa) or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DelWaterGapNPS).



Fishing in the River



Deer Leap Falls

HOW TO COMMENT

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River are asking for public feedback on possible management strategies from September 8 to October 9, 2015. During this period, the public is encouraged to comment on the possible strategies and identify any issues or concerns you have. Please keep in mind when commenting that the unique content of comments received, rather than the number of times a similar comment was heard, is what will help refine the management strategies. There are a number of ways for you to share your thoughts and make your voice heard. **You may submit your comments at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website** (www.parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa). Once on the website, select "Open For Comment" to provide your thoughts on the possible management strategies. Comments may also be submitted in writing to the following address:

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
ATTN: DEWA VUM Plan Team
1978 River Road
Bushkill, PA 18324

The park will be accepting comments starting September 8 and ending October 9, 2015. Please submit all comments via the PEPC website, standard mail, or during the public scoping meetings.



YOU'RE INVITED

NPS will be hosting three open house meetings, and one online webinar. The purpose of the meetings is to present the possible management strategies on the Visitor Use Management Plan, gather your comments, and respond to questions. The meetings will begin with a presentation that gives an overview on the progress of the plan. After the presentation, you can visit stations with more information on the strategies and NPS staff will be available to respond to questions. The open house format will allow participants to show up and share feedback at any time during the two hour meetings. Please join us and share your ideas on the management strategies at the following locations:

Sparta, New Jersey

Thursday, September 10th

7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sussex County Technical School

105 North Church Road

Sparta, NJ 07871

Matamoras, Pennsylvania

Friday, September 11th

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Matamoras Fire Hall

506 Avenue Q

Matamoras, PA 18336

Bushkill, Pennsylvania

Saturday, September 12th

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Bushkill Inn & Conference Center

159 Pocmont Loop

Bushkill, PA 18324



Water Gap from Mt. Tammany



Van Campen Inn



Group Paddle on the River

GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

We would like your feedback on the possible management strategies presented on the next page. As you read through these strategies please consider:

- Which strategies in each topic do you like the best? Why?
- Which strategies do you think the NPS should not consider? Why?
- Do you have any new ideas or changes to existing ideas that you think the planning team should consider?

Please log onto PEPC (www.parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa) and send us your thoughts and ideas on the strategies!

JOIN OUR VIRTUAL MEETING

Wednesday, September 16th

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

The National Park Service will be hosting a webinar on Wednesday, September 16th from 12:00 p.m. till 1:30 p.m. The live webinar will include a formal presentation describing the plan and possible management strategies followed by a question and answer session. Register for the webinar through the following web link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4628695831794997762>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.



Black bear and her cubs

POSSIBLE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Visitor Use Management Plan project team has been working to develop management strategies to include in the plan based on public and stakeholder input, and feedback from all levels of the NPS. At this time, we would like your feedback on the list of possible strategies presented below. The strategies have been divided into eight categories. What else should be included for each category? These strategies would help to protect the park's fundamental resources and values and provide better visitor access and opportunities.

CAMPING AND OVERNIGHT OPPORTUNITIES

Given the interest in more overnight opportunities, additional camping access and locations will be considered to meet a wide range of visitor needs.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Develop new walk-in or bike-in camping opportunities along trails (e.g., along McDade Trail)
- Develop new or improve existing concession-operated campground for vehicle and RV camping
- Provide camping in new or existing concession operated campgrounds and camping areas only
- Provide cabin rentals in historic houses
- Create single user group areas and campsites to prevent user conflicts (e.g., bike-in only, hike-in only)

RIVER ACCESS POINTS

The Delaware River is an important recreational resource for many user groups. The popularity of the area creates challenges such as crowding, conflicts and safety concerns at some river access points, and damage to riparian areas from visitors creating or expanding river access points.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Provide or designate separate access points for day-users, overnight-users, and commercial-users
- Provide an additional boat ramp on the eastern (New Jersey) shoreline
- Expand available parking at some launch sites to accommodate additional use and overnight use
- Enhance picnicking opportunities near river access points (e.g., Bushkill Access)



RIVER CAMPING

River camping continues to be very popular at the park and there have been requests to expand camping opportunities. The park has lost some campsites due to flooding, and the reduced number of campsites and increasing use have resulted in illegal campsites and resource damage.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Increase number of primitive river camping sites and/or cluster campsites along the river and manage through a permit and/or fee system
- Retain the existing number of river campsites and implement a reservation or permit system
- Eliminate river camping and restore areas to natural conditions
- Require pack-in and pack-out of human waste and trash at campsites
- Install removable seasonal toilets or additional environmentally-friendly outhouses at campsites

EXPANDED AND CHANGED RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There is interest in expanded recreational opportunities and there is also a need to adjust how some activities/sites are currently being managed.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Add life guarded swim areas at less developed river sites or non-river locations (e.g., Crater Lake, Waterfall pools, other river locations)
- Disallow swimming at all waterfalls/creeks for public safety
- Designate appropriate creek swimming locations, and disallow swimming at some creeks for resource and habitat protection
- Expand mountain biking and equestrian use in existing or new areas
- Maintain designated locations for use of model airplanes, or restrict the use of model airplanes in the park

DAY-USE PICNIC AND RECREATION SITES

In recent years the current day-use picnic and recreation sites at the park have become very popular. The planning team will evaluate ways to continue to provide opportunities for picnicking and other social recreation, especially for large groups, while protecting the adjacent resources and reducing crowding and user conflicts at these sites.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

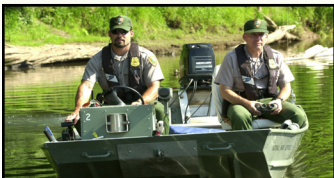
- Expand day-use sites to accommodate large groups (e.g., Crater Lake, Hidden Lake, Slateford Farm, Hialeah Airpark, Dingmans Campground)
- Close sites (temporarily or permanently) with sensitive resources for habitat restoration and protection (e.g., Hialeah Picnic Site, Karamac, Adams Creek)
- Expand current facilities to accommodate more visitors (e.g., Smithfield Beach, Dingmans Launch)
- Formalize (harden/develop) unofficial sites currently used by visitors (e.g., Ames Jennings, Karamac)
- Re-design sites to better accommodate current types and levels of use
- Provide designated (permit) overnight parking for Appalachian Trail and river users.

OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

The implementation of strategies for improvements to visitor services and facilities have additional costs that will likely require the park to increase user fees or change other aspects of park operations to support visitor uses and services.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Implement an entrance fee for all recreation area users to support and improve visitor services
- Increase fees at current fee sites
- Increase the number of fee sites throughout the recreation area and improve services at those locations
- Establish a dedicated park staff to support, monitor, and maintain river activities
- Increase NPS presence throughout the park at popular sites (to promote resource education and preservation of sites)
- Increase concession opportunities for visitor services (e.g., food) at beaches and other destinations



TRAILS AND TRAIL USE

The plan provides the opportunity to consider sustainable trail design to minimize extensive trail and resource damage in high use and sensitive resource areas, and to minimize associated rescues and visitor conflicts.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Reroute some trails to increase challenge and protect the creeks and/or other resources
- Create hardened trails in some areas, including boardwalks, and viewing platform at the end of trails or viewpoints
- Close some trail(s) due to safety and resource protection concerns
- Implement design solutions (e.g., curbing, striping, paving, barriers) to better define parking areas and reduce overflow parking
- Implement a permit system for some trails to reduce crowding and conflicts (e.g., Van Camps Glen, Childs Park)
- Develop a parkwide loop trail (develop more loop trails)
- Create single user group trails (e.g., fishing-only trails, hiking-only trails); this would mean no picnicking or swimming in these areas
- Increase staffing to support management of trails (e.g., close trails, maintain trails, patrol trails, educate visitors, manage permit system)

INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

Education and interpretation is critical to improve visitor understanding of natural and cultural resources, to encourage safe use of the park, to inspire personal connections to the resources, and to increase stewardship by visitors. Education and outreach is an important tool to improve the park's identity as a unit of the NPS System.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- Build a visitor center (or multi-use center) to accommodate large groups and provide a space for visitor education and information
- Adaptively re-purpose historic structures for visitor use and services
- Increase/improve signage for visitor education and wayfinding throughout the recreation area
- Establish a fee for special or complex interpretation programs
- Increase staff presence and roving throughout the park
- Increase formal education programs

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
1978 RIVER ROAD
BUSHKILL, PA 18324

FIRST CLASS MAIL
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
PERMIT NO. G-83

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River

New Jersey and Pennsylvania

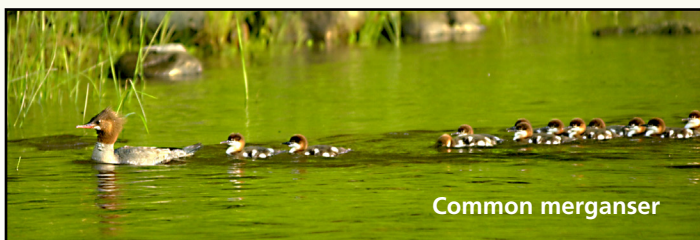
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



September 2015

NEXT STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning team will analyze public comments on the possible management strategies and publish a final public comment report. These comments on the strategies will also help inform the development of the draft plan. A range of alternatives will be developed from the management strategies and presented in the draft plan for public review. Public comments on the draft plan/EIS will then be used for further changes before the plan/EIS is finalized and approved. The planning schedule table on the right provides an updated schedule, including opportunities for public input.



Common merganser

PLANNING SCHEDULE

Planning Phase	Tentative Date
Civic engagement (Listening sessions and focus groups)	April 2015
Development of possible management strategies	May 2015
Public scoping ✓	September 2015
Develop and refine alternatives	October 2015
Prepare the Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	Fall 2015/Spring 2016
Public review of the Draft Plan/EIS	Summer 2016
Prepare the Final Plan/EIS	Winter 2016
Decision Document (ROD)	Winter 2017