



Draft Visitor Use Management Plan

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to announce that the draft Visitor Use Management Plan (VUM Plan) for Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River (the park) is available for public review and comment until December 6, 2019. Public input and participation has been an integral part of the planning process from the beginning and has helped to shape the development of the draft plan.

This newsletter highlights some of the key points contained in the VUM Plan, including updated management zones and desired conditions, improved universal accessibility, modernized interpretation and education opportunities, defined visitor capacities, and enhanced river camping. Detailed information about these strategies, and many more areas, is in the draft plan.

We welcome your input! Your comments will help us revise and finalize the VUM Plan. The draft plan and other documents are available online where you can review them and provide feedback. In addition, the park is hosting two open house meetings where you can learn about and discuss the draft VUM plan. Details on the open house sessions and instructions on how to comment on page 7 of this newsletter.

Thank you for your continued interest in this process and for being a part of the future of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River.

Sincerely,

Sula Jacobs, Superintendent
Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River

We want your feedback!

Please see page 7 for details on our public meetings and for details on how to comment on the VUM plan.



Get the Latest Information

Follow us online to receive updates on the park and the VUM plan.

- Website: <https://www.nps.gov/dewa/learn/management/public-comment.htm>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DelWaterGapNPS/>

What are the Purpose of and Need for the VUM Plan?

The purpose of the VUM plan is to maximize the ability of the National Park Service to encourage access and improve visitor experiences while protecting the natural and cultural resources of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River. This planning process examines current and potential visitor opportunities and develops long-term strategies to provide access, to connect visitors to important experiences, and to manage visitor use. The park's General Management Plan is over 30 years old and does not reflect current visitor use patterns and needs, whereas this VUM plan provides updated guidance to address current and future visitor use opportunities, management strategies, and resource protection concerns.

To meet the purpose and need, to address these issues, and to enhance visitor experiences, the VUM plan identifies the highest value resources, defines locations throughout the park to enhance visitor experiences, and sets priorities for resource protection where visitor use occurs.

What is the Planning Process for the VUM Plan?

This VUM plan uses the visitor use management framework developed by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (for more information, please visit <https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov>) to develop a long-term strategy for managing visitor use within the park. Planning and managing visitor use is at the heart of the NPS mission. Proactively planning and managing visitor use supports responsive management and is at the heart of the National Park Service mission.

For more information on this project, please visit:

<https://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/DEWA>



What are the Goals and Objectives of the VUM Plan?

1. Minimize impacts to resources and visitor experiences caused by visitor use;
2. Enhance opportunities for the park's key visitor experiences;
3. Assess the appropriateness of current and new/evolving visitor opportunities while considering visitor safety and resource protection;
4. Align public expectations for use with availability of resources or infrastructure;
5. Increase understanding of existing and emerging visitor interests, use characteristics, patterns, and trends;
6. Manage visitor demand and expectations at popular destinations; and
7. Identify and evaluate various visitor use management strategies.



How Has the Planning Process Changed?

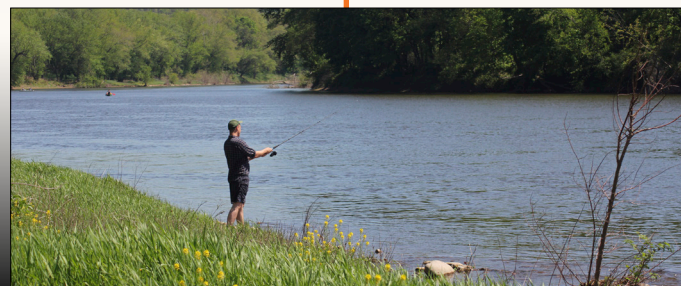
In 2014, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River completed a foundation document, which listed a VUM plan as their highest priority planning need. The VUM plan would address visitor use for the entire park.

In the beginning of the planning process for the VUM plan, the National Park Service anticipated that there may be significant environmental impacts associated with the plan's proposed actions, so the National Park Service pursued an Environmental Impact Statement to analyze those impacts. After analyzing the suite of potential alternatives and strategies, the National Park Service determined that such an in-depth environmental analysis would not be required. The level of National Environmental Policy Act compliance needed for this VUM plan will be assessed after analyzing the public comments received on the VUM plan.

This VUM plan is an amendment to the park's 1987 General Management Plan, which provides direction for long-term management, including visitor use. Much of the General Management Plan is still valid and in effect, including the general measures for the protection of resources and indicators for the general developmental goals. This current planning effort builds on, and in some cases amends, the guidance related to visitor use management provided in the General Management Plan by adding more specific visitor use management guidance.

Organization of the VUM Plan

- **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Plan**
Defines visitor use management, identifies the goals, describes the need for a new plan, and outlines the relationship to other planning efforts.
- **Chapter 2: Existing Conditions Summary and Related Issues**
Describes the issues addressed in the plan, summarizes existing information and current conditions, and provides background information and regional socioeconomic context.
- **Chapter 3: General VUM Direction**
Outlines the general visitor use management direction for the park and documents the necessary and appropriate determination for commercial uses and services.
- **Chapter 4: Management Strategies & Actions**
Identifies management strategies and actions that would be used to achieve and maintain the desired conditions related to visitor use of the park.
- **Chapter 5: Visitor Capacity**
Outlines the considerations and processes used to identify visitor capacity for key destinations in the park.
- **Chapter 6: Implementation, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management**
Summarizes the implementation schedule, the proposed monitoring protocols for indicators, and the adaptive actions related to those indicators.

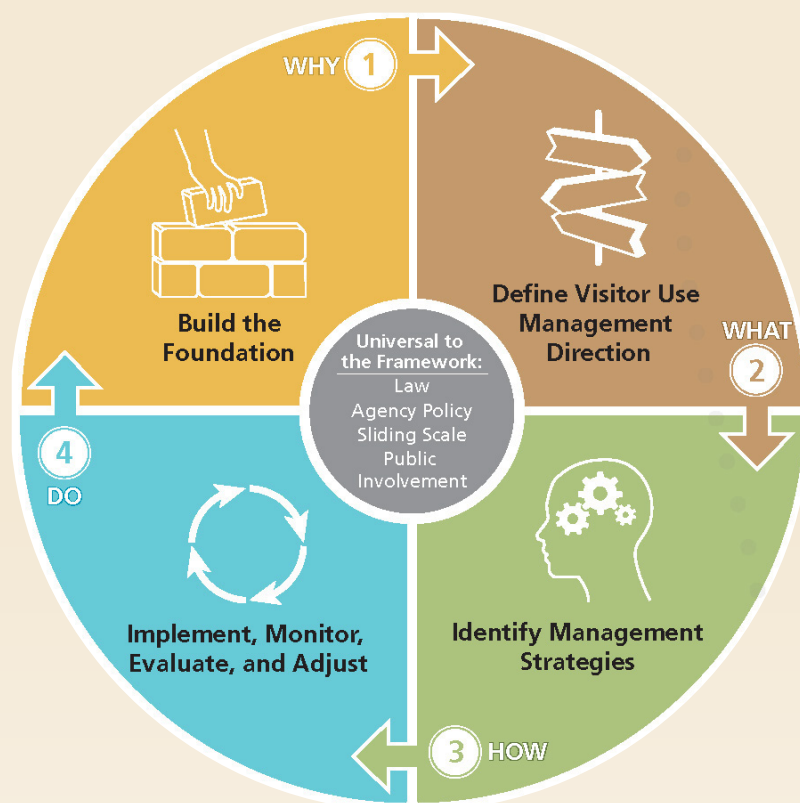


Important Components of the VUM Plan

Establishing indicators and thresholds and identifying and implementing visitor capacity limits are key components of the Visitor Use Management Framework applied by the National Park Service. The figure to the right presents an overview of the visitor use management framework. VUM components included in this plan are defined below.

- Monitoring strategies generate usable data to compare existing and desired conditions, assess the need for management actions, and evaluate the efficacy of management actions. A well-planned monitoring strategy provides transparency, communication, and potential cost savings through efficiencies and possibly cost sharing. A monitoring strategy also includes the selection of indicators, establishment of thresholds and any needed triggers, systematic data collection of the indicators over time, and associated documentation and analysis.
- Indicators translate desired conditions into measurable attributes that when tracked over time, evaluate change in resource or experiential conditions. These are critical components of monitoring the success of the plan.
- Thresholds represent the minimum acceptable condition for each indicator and were established by considering qualitative descriptions of the desired conditions, data on existing conditions, relevant research studies, professional judgement of staff from management experience, and scoping on public preferences.
- Triggers are defined as conditions of concern for an indicator that is enough to prompt a management response to ensure that desired conditions continue to be maintained before the threshold is crossed.
- Visitor capacity is the maximum amount and type of visitor use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established.
- Mitigation measures are activities that will avoid, reduce the severity of, or eliminate effects to park resources.

Not all of the strategies related to the indicators, thresholds, and visitor capacity would be implemented immediately, rather as thresholds are approached or exceeded. Those strategies identified for use as needed are labeled as adaptive management strategies. For more information on the plan components, see chapter 4 of the VUM plan.



Visitor Use Management Framework

Key DEWA VUM Plan Strategies

- Articulate desired conditions, meaningfully manage resources, and provide context-appropriate recreation.
- Improve, restore, and protect park resources by intentionally zoning, reducing impacts, and accommodating more visitors.
- Provide enhanced recreation opportunities and experiences consistent with park fundamental resources and values, including camping, hunting, hiking, boating, and other experiences.
- Identify and prioritize short-, mid-, and long-term management strategies to accomplish the goals listed above.

Some Key Topics in the VUM Plan

Zoning. The 1987 General Management Plan created management zones, which prescribed appropriate uses for all lands within the park. However, zoning is outdated in some areas and no longer accurate or reflective of the park's management strategies, as managers now have more information on the park's resources, some policies have changed, and visitor activities and experiences have evolved. Under the VUM plan, modifications would be made to the existing zones. The VUM plan identified the following updated zones: Natural Resource Zone, Outstanding Natural Feature Zone, Visitor Service Area Zone, Historic Zone, and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River Zone. Details on how zoning has changed from the General Management Plan can be found in chapter 3 of the VUM plan.

Hunting. Hunting would continue to be allowed in the park. Hunting is specifically mandated in the park's enabling legislation and this plan would not change any provisions or language of the enabling legislation.

Desired Conditions. Desired conditions are defined as statements of aspiration that describe resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area. Desired conditions focus on fundamental resources and values; the visitor experience opportunities associated with them; and the types and levels of management, development, and access that would be appropriate in a particular location. The desired conditions for this plan are based on previous planning efforts and other NPS policies and guidance. The desired conditions for zones articulate what kinds of experiences and opportunities should be provided for specific areas of the park. The desired conditions for fundamental resources and values and for the zones are presented in chapter 3 of the VUM plan.

Accessibility. Universal access would be provided at key locations and for a variety of opportunities, such as fishing platforms, ramp access to key visitor use buildings, virtual tours, and audio interpretation.



Fees. All visitors would be required to pay an entrance fee. This would be a change from the amenity fees program that currently operates at the park in locations such as Dingmans Access and Smithfield Beach. Parkwide fees would help balance use across fee and non-fee sites, reduce impacts to resources in sensitive areas, and generate revenue to enhance park operations and improve visitor services.

River Camping. The park would restore river camping opportunities lost to past flooding events, maintain both primitive river campsites and those associated with amenities, address proper disposal of human waste, implement a river campsite reservation system and fee (\$16 per campsite), and reduce conflicts and competition for campsites and improve visitor safety.

A park-specific seven-day pass would cost visitors \$25 (vehicle), \$15 (person), and \$20 (motorcycle). An annual pass would also be available for \$45. Fees are not static and could be reevaluated in the future.

Trails. The park currently offers more than 100 miles of hiking trails. The park would continue to provide a variety of trails; expand and develop linked trail networks; design multi-use recreational trails; and manage some trails to provide opportunities for solitude. Visitor-created trails would be restored to natural conditions.

Education and Interpretation. Modernized services would offer virtual visitor experiences and distance learning opportunities through increased web and social media presence. A mobile visitor center would allow greater access to important information on park resources and recreational opportunities for a larger number of visitors by taking the visitor center to the people.

How Did Public Feedback Influence the VUM Plan?

The National Park Service consulted with various agencies, tribes, organizations, and interested parties in preparing the VUM plan. The process of consultation and coordination is an important part of this project.

Before the start of the formal public involvement process, the park held two public listening sessions and two focus group meetings for stakeholders and land managers. These meetings were held in April 2015.

During the formal scoping period, the public was able to review the planning team's initial proposed management strategies in several ways — in the public scoping newsletter, at public scoping meetings, via a public scoping webinar, and on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) system website. Three public meetings and one webinar were held in September 2015; in total, 170 people attended the meetings. Following these meetings, the meeting posters and recorded webinar were posted on PEPC for public review.

The public was able to provide input on the initial management strategies in writing at the public meetings or through the mail and electronically through PEPC. The public scoping comment period was open from September 8 through October 9, 2015. The National Park Service received 114 individual correspondences during the comment period. Commenters provided input on all aspects of the possible management strategies, including recreation topics, health and safety, interpretation and education, and operation strategies. Commenters had varying views on how these elements should be managed. All public and agency input was used to inform the planning process. During this period, the park conducted a number of visitor use surveys and studies to help inform the planning process. Approximately 2,000 completed visitor surveys and 100,000 field camera photos were used to assess visitor experiences, use levels, and visitors' expectations and attitudes towards the park unit and its management. Data were also collected on indicators and thresholds for the visitor experience and related carrying capacities.



What are the Next Steps in the Planning Process?

The VUM plan will be made available for a 60-day review and comment period to federal, state, and local agencies and all other interested parties. Comments will be accepted electronically through the NPS PEPC website (<https://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa>) or in the form of written letters that must be post-marked by December 6, 2019.

Following the close of the comment period, the National Park Service will evaluate and consider all comments received. Substantive comments—those that raise, debate, or question facts or policies discussed in the VUM plan—will be identified and responded to in a Comment Analysis Report that will be included in the final plan.

The National Park Service will edit the draft VUM plan, as necessary, based on agency and public comments, and the final VUM plan will be published. When the VUM plan is signed by the Northeast Regional Director, the National Park Service will begin implementing the VUM plan.

The anticipated schedule for the planning process for the VUM plan is available on the back page of this newsletter.



How Can You Share Comments?

We would like your feedback on the VUM plan. Comments are welcome and will be accepted during the 60-day public comment period, which ends on December 6, 2019. There are a number of ways for you to share your thoughts and make your voice heard. Please note that comments submitted via email or social media will not be accepted.

We encourage you to submit your comments through the NPS PEPC website at <https://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/dewa>. Once on the website, select “Open For Comment” to provide your thoughts on the VUM plan.

Comments may also be submitted in writing during one of the public open house meetings or mailed to the following address:

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



Pop-Up Meetings

The National Park Service will be holding impromptu pop-up meetings in the park during the public comment period. Pop-up meetings seek to engage the public by bringing the public meeting to where the visitors already are in the park. The National Park Service uses pop-up meetings to engage with visitors who may not be aware of the VUM plan process and those who may be unable to attend one of the open house meetings due to prior commitments, distance, or a variety of other reasons. Park staff will be available to give an overview of the VUM plan. These meetings will be an opportunity for visitors to ask park staff questions about the VUM plan. As with the open house meetings, all comments must be in writing. Participants of the pop-up meetings can submit written comments in person at the meeting, through PEPC, or by mail. Comment cards will be available at the pop-up meetings for visitors to complete and leave with park staff at the meeting or to complete at home and mail to the park by the end of the comment period. The pop-up meetings will be posted on the park's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DelWaterGapNPS>.



Open House Meetings

Please join us at one of the open house meetings to learn more about the VUM plan and discuss your concerns and ideas with NPS staff.

Bushkill, Pennsylvania

Thursday, October 24, 2019
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Bushkill Volunteer Fire
Company, Station 24
124 Evergreen Drive
Bushkill, PA 18324

Sparta, New Jersey

Saturday, October 26, 2019
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sussex County Technical
School Auditorium
105 North Church Road
Sparta, NJ 07871



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
1978 RIVER ROAD
BUSHKILL, PA 18324

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Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River
New Jersey and Pennsylvania
Fall 2019

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Planning Process for the Visitor Use Management Plan

Estimated Date	Planning Activity	Ways to Be Involved
April 2015	Civic Engagement	Attend listening sessions and focus groups and provide formal written comment
May 2015	Development of Possible Management Strategies	Internal NPS task
September 2015	Public Scoping	Attend a public meeting or the virtual meeting Review the newsletter and provide written comments
October 2015 – June 2017	Develop and Refine Alternatives and Prepare the VUM Plan	Internal NPS task
✓ Fall 2019	Public Review of the Draft VUM Plan	Attend a public meeting or pop-up meeting Review the draft VUM plan and provide written comments
Winter 2020	Analyze Public Comments and Prepare the Final VUM Plan	Internal NPS task
Summer 2020	Public Release of the Final VUM Plan	Stay up to date on the planning process by visiting the park website; Work with the park to implement the VUM plan