



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Valley Forge National Historical Park
1400 North Outer Line Drive
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1009

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H42 (VAFO-P)

JUN 13 2012

Bonnie Dershem
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Pennsylvania Field Office
315 South Allen Drive, Suite 322
State College, PA 16801

Dear Ms. Dershem:

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of a National Park Service (NPS) planning process underway at Valley Forge National Historical Park. The NPS proposes to issue a Request for Proposals to lease the house and immediately associated grounds of the Philander Chase Knox estate. The tenant will use the area for private events between April and the end of October, erecting a tent on the lawn east of the house.

The purpose of the lease is to provide managed public access to the house and also to provide revenue for its ongoing maintenance and preservation. One section of the house is currently used as the Park Library, accessible by appointment only. Other parts of the house are used by Park staff for occasional meetings and storage areas, and the remainder of the house is unused and vacant. NPS has determined that there is no other feasible park operational or visitor services use for the buildings.

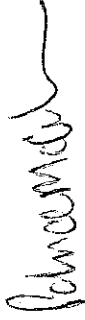
No modifications would be required or permitted to the interior of the house. On the exterior, the proposed project would include the construction of a gravel parking lot within the former walled garden west of the greenhouse and the addition of a new 10' wide access lane between Library Lane and the proposed parking lot. More details may be seen on the enclosed overview.

This letter serves as notification that we have begun the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and are proposing to have a combined Environmental Assessment (EA) and Assessment of Effect (AOE) available for public and regulatory review later this year. In addition, this letter serves as a record that the NPS is initiating informal consultation with your agency pursuant to the requirements of the 1973 Endangered Species Act, as amended. In order to comply, we are requesting information concerning federal and state rare, threatened, and endangered species documented or reasonably suspected within 0.5 miles of the project site, which is depicted on the enclosed map. We are also coordinating with the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index to obtain and review their file information.

Should you know of or come across any resource constraint that may be a possible planning issue, please do not hesitate to contact us. We anticipate no significant environmental impacts associated with the project and look forward to receiving any guidance or comments you may have regarding the process or the project itself.

Thank you for your anticipated assistance with this matter. If you need additional information or have any questions regarding this request, please contact Deirdre Gibson at (610) 783-1047, or by mail at the above address.

Sincerely,



Kate H. Hammond
Superintendent



Enclosures