

Rock Creek Park
Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service



Reconstruction & Rehabilitation of Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



July 2012



Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Southbound at Waterside Drive, NW

Rock Creek Park Washington, D.C.

Environmental Assessment

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SUMMARY

This environmental assessment (EA) evaluates a range of feasible alternatives and strategies for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway southbound at Waterside Drive, NW in the District of Columbia. The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes a combination of road safety improvements located where the southbound ramp from Waterside Drive, NW merges onto Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway (the parkway), in Washington, D.C.

Rock Creek Park is an administrative unit of the NPS that includes Rock Creek Park proper (Reservation 339) and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway (Reservation 360). It is located in the Northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C.

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve traffic flow and to minimize the number of vehicle accidents along the parkway in the vicinity of Waterside Drive, NW using a combination of improvements to include a new acceleration lane along the parkway where the southbound ramp from Waterside Drive, NW merges. The proposed action would also address severe erosion that occurred along the stream banks of Rock Creek in the vicinity of Waterside Drive, NW as a result of flooding after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee moved through the Washington, D.C. area during consecutive weeks in the August and September of 2011.

Action is needed at this time to improve traffic flow and to minimize the number of vehicle accidents where the southbound ramp from Waterside Drive, NW merges with the parkway. A small merge area and poor sight distances have resulted in numerous vehicle accidents and backups of cars waiting to merge at the intersection of Waterside Drive, NW and the southbound parkway. As a result, the NPS needs to increase sight distances and lengthen the merge area to improve motor vehicle visibility and traffic safety. In addition, action is needed to address the erosion that has occurred, affecting the stability of the Rock Creek Park Multi-use Trail.

This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Park Service's Director's Order 12; *Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making* (NPS 20011). Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as Amended (NHPA) has occurred in conjunction with the NEPA process.

The NPS explored and objectively evaluated a range of alternatives. Four alternatives were carried forward for further analysis: 1) Alternative 1: No Action, 2) Alternative 2: Restore to Original Conditions, 3) Alternative 3: Add Merge Lane by Widening the Road toward the Creek, and 4) Alternative 4: Add Merge Lane by Widening the Road toward the Median. Alternative 4 is the preferred alternative chosen by the NPS.

Note to Reviewers and Respondents

If you wish to comment on the EA, you may mail comments to the name and address below or respond online via <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=39210>. The comment period will be open for 30 days after the release of the EA. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Please address all comments to:

Tara Morrison, Superintendent
Rock Creek Park
3545 Williamsburg Lane, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-1207

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