



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Mall and Memorial Parks
900 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024-2000

MAY - 8 2014

Mr. Reid Nelson
Director
Office of Federal Agency Programs
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 803
Washington, D.C. 20004

Subject: Proposed Rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens, National Mall, Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Nelson:

The National Park Service (NPS) has initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on the planned rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., an undertaking that will have an effect upon historic properties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Additionally, the NPS is currently preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Its partners in the proposed project are The Trust for the National Mall.

Situated between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, Constitution Gardens was designed as pastoral landscape with a natural lake, a quiet oasis removed from the bustle of the capital. This 52-acre park was officially dedicated in 1976, with the island in the center dedicated to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1982. Sadly, within just a few years of its opening, the conditions of the lake and the trees began to be of concern. Poor soil conditions have kept some of the trees from reaching full maturity to this day. Subsequently, many of the walkways have deteriorated and the visitor services facility once imagined at the eastern end of the lake was never realized.

The purpose of this project is to rehabilitate Constitution Gardens to improve the ecology, accessibility, cultural and recreational opportunities, and visitor services of the area. It conforms to the National Mall Plan which calls for the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens to improve resource conditions and circulation, relocate the Canal Lockkeeper's House, provide flexible opportunities for relaxation, entertainment, and recreation, as well as improved visitor service facilities. The proposed rehabilitation is the subject of the EA and constitutes an undertaking under Section 106.

The NPS wishes to formally initiate consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens. The NPS will present an overview of the project at a public scoping meeting on May 22, 2014 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20004 - and would be pleased to have you or a member of your staff attend and furnish comments.

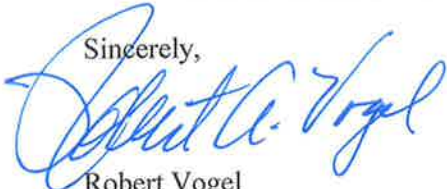
At this early stage, we are unable to propose either an area of potential effect (APE) or to make any determination of effect. The NPS plans to coordinate the Section 106 and NEPA processes to the greatest extent possible and to use the NEPA public scoping process to fulfill the requirement to take the views of the public into account. However, we do not intend to utilize the regulatory path of "substituting" the EA for Section 106.

The NPS will present an overview of the project at a public scoping meeting on May 22, 2014 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20004 - and would be pleased to have you or a member of your staff attend and furnish comments.

A copy of the draft EA will be provided to your office for review when it becomes available, and we anticipate further consultation with your office as mandated by Section 106.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact James Perry by phone at (202) 245-4711, by fax at (202) 426-9309, or by email at james_perry@nps.gov

Sincerely,



Robert Vogel
Superintendent,
National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Park Service