



Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Plan/EA

Washington, DC

Rock Creek Park

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Superintendent
RE: Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Plan/EA
Rock Creek Park
3545 Williamsburg Lane, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Please join us:

April 24 and 25, 2007

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

at the Rock Creek

Park Nature Center

for the Wireless

Telecommunication

Facilities Plan/EA Public

Scoping Meeting.

The purpose of these meetings is to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the development of a Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA) at Rock Creek Park. The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking comment on the purpose, need, and objectives of the plan, as well as the preliminary alternative concepts, provided in this newsletter.

Two meetings will be held with the same information presented at each. Each meeting will begin with an open house from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. During the open house, NPS staff will be available to answer questions and take public comment. After the open house, the NPS will give a brief presentation on the history of wireless telecommunication facilities in the park, a brief description of preliminary alternative concepts, criteria for reasonable alternatives, and a summary of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. At approximately 7:30 pm, the public comment portion of the meeting will begin, allowing attendees to provide comment in a public forum that will be transcribed by a court reporter. Attendees will also have the opportunity to provide written comment on forms provided at the meeting or on-line at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/rocr>. All comments received during the public involvement period, including the public scoping meeting, will be used in the development of the Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Plan/EA.

We're on the web!!

www.nps.gov/rocr

Purpose

The purpose of this plan and environmental assessment is to provide all administered units of Rock Creek Park with a consistent framework for protecting park resources during the consideration of “special use permit” applications and other inquiries submitted to the park for the construction, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities.

Need for Action

A wireless telecommunication facilities plan is needed to meet the conditions of the 2003, Rock Creek Park Telecommunication Facilities EA Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), which states that the National Park Service will:

Develop and adopt a telecommunication facilities plan to assist the park in future decision making regarding potential telecommunication facilities permit applications.

The 2003 EA, which resulted in a FONSI, was conducted as a result of litigation pertaining to two existing wireless telecommunication facilities in the park and the process leading to their authorization. As a result of the 2003 FONSI, the NPS is also conducting a 3-year bird study that centers on neotropical birds, to enrich the understanding of the impacts of these facilities on this park population. Another federal agency, the National Capital Planning Commission will consider the current planning and the bird study – when it reviews wireless telecommunication applications for the park.

Trends in siting wireless telecommunication facilities suggest an increase in demand for appropriate sites to fill coverage gaps. A wireless telecommunication facilities plan is needed to provide a consistent and coordinated process for considering special use permit applications throughout Rock Creek Park administered units and assist the park with the protection of natural and cultural resources, human health, visitor safety, and visitor experience.

Objectives

MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

- Provide the foundation for decision-making regarding the issuance of special use permits for the provision of wireless telecommunication facilities within Rock Creek Park administered units.
- Establish criteria for determining where telecommunication facilities would or would not be appropriate in Rock Creek Park.
- Provide guidance on how the park can meet the requirements set out in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the 1995 Presidential directive and government-wide procedures, and relevant NPS laws, regulations, and policies

as they relate to the installation, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities.

- Determine management measures for the installation, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities that can be implemented to protect the park units’ cultural and natural resources.
- Serve and maintain the management prescriptions and goals outlined in the Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Final General Management Plan as they relate to the installation, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities.

WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

- Incorporate best available research related to the construction, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities and the effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat, specifically migratory birds.
- Specify wildlife and wildlife habitat resource conditions to be protected and maintained at all Rock Creek Park administered units as related to the installation, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Specify cultural resource conditions to be protected and maintained at all Rock Creek Park administered units as related to the installation, operation, and maintenance of wireless telecommunication facilities.
- Protect those features contributing to the historic designed landscape of all Rock Creek Park administered units.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Ensure public safety within the park.
- Protect the health and safety of park employees and visitors from exposure to telecommunication facilities.

LAND USE

- Communicate and coordinate with adjacent property owners, existing land use plans and policies affecting the area, and other local entities and federal authorities such as the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts during the development and implementation of a wireless telecommunication facilities pan.

Background

Utility services and communications facilities have historically been located in NPS units, either to provide service within the park or because geographic or other considerations necessitate the use of parklands to provide service to users outside a park. A wide range of communications facilities are eligible for rights of way permits, including wireless telecommunication facilities, radio, television, and traditional

telephones. Telecommunication is the transmission, emission or reception of radio signals, digital images, sound bytes or other information via wires, cables and space, through radio frequencies, satellites, microwaves, or other electromagnetic systems. Telecommunication includes the transmission of voice, video, data, and broadband using wireless or satellite technologies. In the case of this plan, telecommunication refers to wireless telecommunication, including mobile phones, that rely on the combination of land lines, fiber, and an extensive network of elevated antennas, typically found on communication towers, to transmit voice and data information. This plan may, however, also inform park decisions for other communications facilities. Currently there are two wireless telecommunication facilities located within the boundaries of Rock Creek Park: a 100-foot monopole-mounted wireless telecommunication antenna and supporting infrastructure at the Rock Creek Park tennis center and a 130-foot monopole and supporting infrastructure at the park’s maintenance yard. Both are able to accommodate additional antennas as co-locaters.

As the use of and types of wireless technologies increase, the need for siting new facilities may also increase, which has the potential to impact National Park System units throughout the country. About 35 national parks have wireless telecommunication facilities permitted within their boundaries. In some parks, equipment has been installed on existing towers, buildings, and structures. In the Washington, DC area, these include not only Rock Creek Park but towers in administered units of George Washington Memorial Parkway, Catoctin Mountain Park, and such locations throughout the country as Big Cypress National Preserve, Yellowstone National Park, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Alternative Concepts

Rock Creek Park has developed preliminary alternative concepts for the consideration of wireless telecommunication facilities within the park. These concepts were created to start discussion of the possible alternatives for wireless telecommunication facility management. The input received at public scoping will be used to help further develop these alternatives for analysis in the plan/EA. Suggestions for additional alternatives are also welcome at this time.

Under each alternative, the NPS will consider all permit and renewal applications and associated siting requests in accordance with the applicable authorities, NPS policies including Management Policies 2006, Director’s Order 53 and NPS Reference Manual RM-53, and when it is finalized, the Park’s General Management Plan.

No Action – The no action alternative (or existing conditions continued) is required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Under the no action alternative, the existing towers at the tennis

center and maintenance yard would continue to operate in their current capacity under the current right-of-way permit, which allows for co-location on these facilities. Permit and renewal applications would be considered without any additional guidelines and no park specific siting information would be applied.

Management Guided by the Rock Creek Park General Management Plan (GMP) and Additional Criteria – Under this concept, the park would consider the suitability of wireless telecommunication facilities in each of the applicable management zones in the park’s GMP, as well as in the remaining administered units of the park. In addition, criteria would be developed that could be applied consistently to further evaluate all right-of-way applications. These criteria would be based on applicable laws and regulations and would take into consideration the sensitive natural and cultural resources within the park, as well as visitor use and experience. Criteria could also include requirements for the type or size of equipment used.

Management Addressing Coverage Gaps – Under this concept, the park would address public safety concerns by considering the siting of facilities in areas where there is an existing gap in wireless telecommunication coverage and where visitor use would occur, as long as there is not a conflict with the park mission and resources. Based on a preliminary gap coverage analysis, these areas occur primarily along Beach Drive through the main unit of Rock Creek Park and Military Road. Although facilities would be permitted to site in this area, they may be subject to design criteria such as height, color, technology type, etc. to minimize impacts to park resources.



[illegible]

Email Address: _____

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