

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

Project Scoping - Retaining Wall 11900 River
Road, Potomac, MD

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

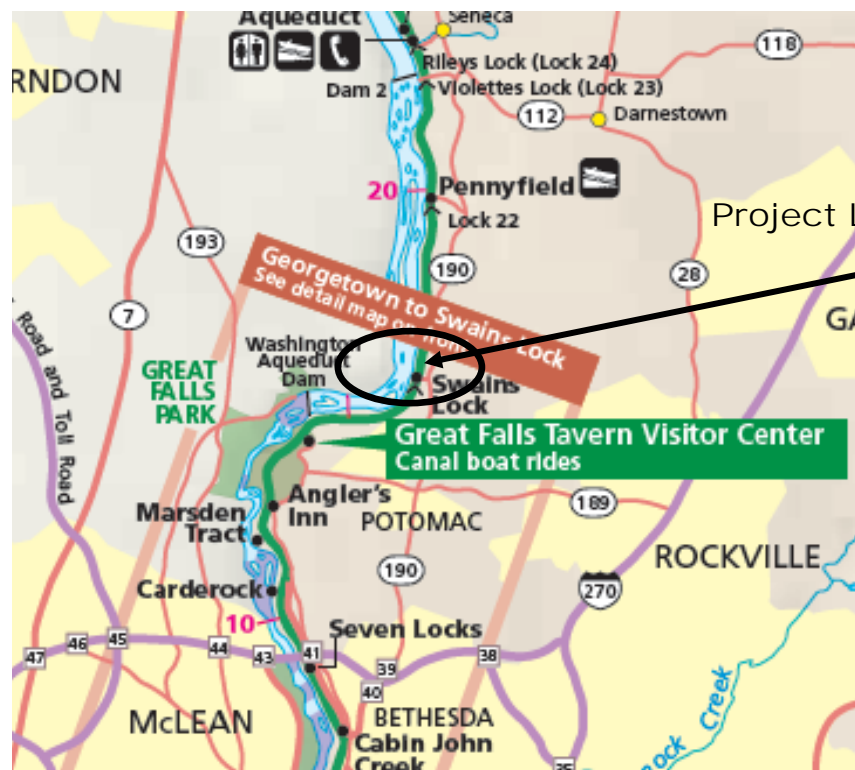


November 1-30, 2007
Meeting - November 7

Public Scoping for Retaining Wall, 11900 River Road, Potomac, MD

The National Park Service (NPS) is processing a request from the property owner (applicant) of 11900 River Road, Potomac, Maryland. The applicant wishes to replace a failing retaining wall that is located within a scenic easement of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and other laws, regulations, and policies, the National Park Service is initiating work on an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project to the natural, cultural, and human environment. The EA will evaluate the request and consider alternatives to replacing the retaining wall which supports a terraced lawn and residential building. Comments received during the public scoping will help formulate the EA.



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Easement Boundaries

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Purpose and Need

Although the property is privately owned, an EA is necessary because the retaining wall is located within a scenic easement held by the United States of America and administered by the National Park Service. Among other things, this easement creates a 200 foot setback from the canal where no structures, including walls, can be built or rebuilt. Most of the existing wall is within this distance, including the sections of the wall that have failed, and adjacent sections that are buckling and may collapse in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the applicant has requested the Secretary of the Interior to consider allowing rebuilding of the wall just down slope from the current wall. This would locate the new wall about 2 feet closer to the canal. The National Park Service and the Department of the Interior will utilize the NEPA process to determine whether to permit construction within this area of the scenic easement. The NEPA process will evaluate all feasible alternatives, which will include the alternative requested by the applicant. The applicant will be responsible for all costs associated with review of the project as well as the implementation of the project, if approved.



Existing Site Conditions - Wall failure/landslide area (NPS photo, April 2007)

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Background

The scenic easement, including the 200 foot setback from the canal where no structures may be placed, was acquired from a previous owner of the property in the 1970's. The applicant has owned the property since 1999. The retaining wall was constructed between 20-30 years ago and was in situ upon purchase in 1999. The wall is 400 feet long, and ranges in height from 2 – 7 feet due to variations in the terrain. The wall is concrete and stone and is not considered a historic structure. Metal pipe bracing was installed by a previous owner along the face of the wall near the north end. A chain link fence is located on top of the stone wall with a second chain link fence located approximately 8 feet downslope of the wall.

In 2005, a 60 foot portion of the wall, near the bracing, collapsed and a resulting landslide occurred. Crack monitors were attached to the wall, subsequent to the collapse, to help track wall movement. Montgomery County was consulted and required silt fencing be installed below the wall to prevent soil erosion into the canal. As an additional erosion control measure, Montgomery County required tarps to be installed over the bare earth.



Existing Wall condition (NPS photo, April 2007)

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Potential Alternatives to the Applicant's Request

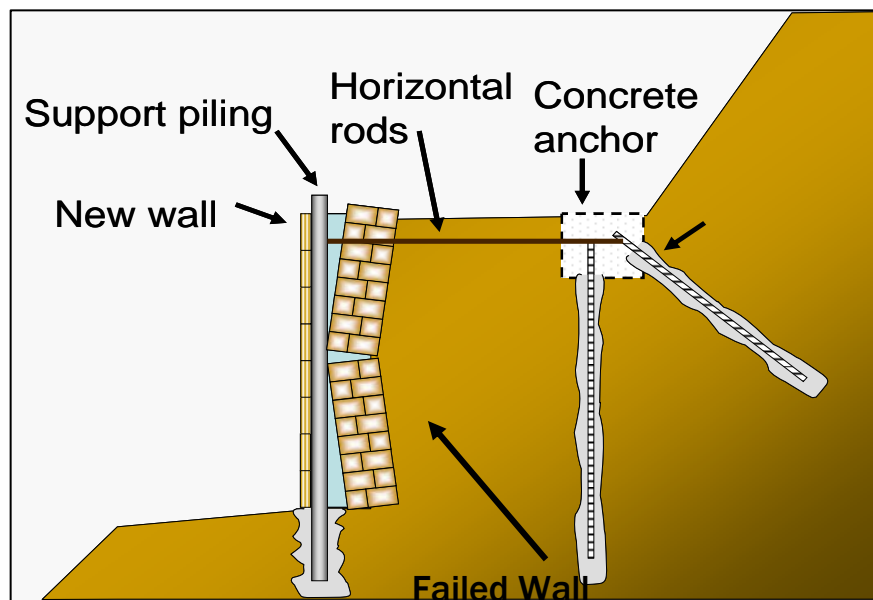
NEPA requires the development of potential alternatives for proposed projects. These alternatives are developed as a result of project scoping by the public, affected agencies, and NPS. The alternatives are then evaluated within the EA document for their potential impacts on the environment and park resources and values.

All EAs need to include a "No Action" alternative. This alternative also serves as the baseline for the other alternatives used in the evaluation. The No Action alternative, for this proposed project, is the status quo. The wall failure/landslide area could continue to fail with the potential impacts to the C&O Canal from landslide debris, loss of lawn area beside the residence, and potential of structural damage to the residence.

The applicant has requested to construct a new wall in front of (downslope from) the line of the existing wall (See Figure on page 6). Alternatives to the applicant's request could include structures either wholly or partially outside the 200' scenic easement setback (if this is found to be feasible). In addition, various actions could be prescribed to mitigate or reduce identified impacts to park resources such as vegetative plantings or construction of a wall that blends visually with surrounding textures and colors to mask the view of a wall.

We are interested in whether the Department of Interior/National Park Service should allow this construction or not and what alternatives you feel should be considered within the environmental assessment.

APPLICANT REQUESTED ALTERNATIVE



Applicant's Request (Traylor Group, 2007)

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Resources and Impact Topics

The initial internal project scoping identified the following resources and impact topics for consideration in the EA:

- Geology
- Soil
- Surface Water
- Floodplains
- Vegetation
- Wetlands
- Wildlife and Aquatic Life
- Scenic Viewshed
- Archaeological Resources
- Cultural Landscape/Resources
- Visitor Use and Experience
- Park Operations
- Public Safety
- Socioeconomic Environment
- Endangered and Threatened Species

Environmental Assessment Process Overview

Project milestones include:

- Public and agency scoping period - November 1 through November 30, 2007
- Public Scoping Meeting – November 7, 2007
- Analysis of scoping comments – Fall 2007
- Preparation of EA – Fall/Winter 2007/2008
- Public review of EA – Spring 2008
- Analysis of public comment – Spring 2008
- Preparation of decision document – Spring/Summer 2008
- Announcement of decision on proposal – Summer 2008

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Public Scoping Period

The NPS is conducting a 30-day public scoping period to solicit public comments on this proposal. During this scoping period, the public is invited to identify any issues or concerns they might have with the proposed project so the National Park Service can appropriately consider them in the EA. The NPS prefers that you submit comments electronically at the National Park Service's Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>). Written comments may be mailed to:

**Superintendent
C&O Canal National Historical Park
1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100
Hagerstown, MD 21740**

Only written comments will be considered. Please submit your written scoping comments by **November 30, 2007**. Once the EA is developed, it will be made available for public review for a 30-day period. If you wish to be added to the park's mailing list for this or other announcements, please be sure to indicate that in your response.

Please feel free to use the following comment form, regarding this project, for your comments and suggestions. You may drop this off with us at the public scoping meeting, or mail them in later to the address listed above.

Thank you for your interest in your National Parks.

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PLEASE PRINT

Your Name _____

Organization you represent (if any) _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

If you would like us to notify you when the Draft EA is available, please let us know how to contact you:

☐ Mail

☐ Email: _____

Comments, suggestions that will help us with the scope of the Environmental Assessment:

1. What are your views on what should be done with the retaining wall?

2. What other reasonable alternatives or issues do you think should be addressed?
