

1.0 Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

In 2006, Congress authorized the Government of Ukraine to establish a memorial to honor the victims of the Ukrainian famine in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act. The National Park Service (NPS) and the National Committee to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Ukrainian Genocide of 1932-1933 (the National Committee) are cooperating, under the legislation, to establish an international memorial as a tribute to millions of Ukrainians who suffered as a result of the Soviet-forced famine in 1932-1933. The National Committee is part of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Inc. (UCCA), a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that has represented the interests of America's ethnic Ukrainians for over sixty years. The UCCA's mission is to support cultural, educational, and humanitarian activities that emphasize Ukrainian American heritage and to provide support for Ukraine's newly developing democracy.

The National Committee was formed for the purpose of commemorating the 75th anniversary through a year of events, beginning with a National March of Remembrance in New York City on November 17, 2007, culminating with the selection and dedication of a site for the Ukrainian Famine Memorial (the Memorial) in the Nation's Capital in the fall of 2008. The selection of a site for the purpose of establishing the Memorial is the subject of this Environmental Assessment (EA).

NEPA

The NPS and the National Committee have prepared this EA in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508], and the NPS Director's Order-12 (as reflected in the DO-12 Handbook). This EA is also consistent with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA).

This EA seeks to document and describe the proposed sites for the Memorial, determine the potential impacts on the natural and man-made environment, and recommend mitigation measures related to its implementation. The EA also evaluates a No Action Alternative, as required by CEQ. The EA addresses: 1) short-term construction-related impacts, 2) long-term operational impacts, and 3) cumulative impacts that would result from this and other projects that have been completed recently, are currently under development, or are proposed within the study area.

1.2 Project Background

Ukraine experienced a devastating famine in the early decades of the 20th century. Unknown to many in the world at that time and even today, the famine was an engineered-famine, induced by the totalitarian regime of Josef Stalin in the Soviet Union between 1932 and 1933. During the famine, 7 to 10 million Ukrainians were deliberately and systematically starved to death by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government introduced unrealistically high quotas on grain and other agricultural products, which were strictly enforced by Red Army troops. Only when the Ukraine restored its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, did the Ukrainian people begin openly discussing the events of 1932-1933, with witnesses coming forth to tell of the horrors they experienced during the famine.

To bring focus of the Ukrainian Famine to the world's attention, the Ukrainian government sought to build a memorial in Washington, DC to honor the victims of this largely-unknown holocaust. During its years of subjugation by the Soviet Union, the United States remained a beacon of hope that eventually Ukraine and its people will live free and be sovereign in their own country. Today, this gesture of goodwill presented to the American people will signify the relevance of Ukraine's tragedy 75 years ago. America's long-standing role as the foremost champion of human rights in the world makes Washington, DC the best location for a memorial to this tragedy.

1.3 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed Memorial is to honor the millions of Ukrainians who lost their lives due to the Ukrainian Famine that occurred in 1932-1933. The proposed Memorial would coincide with the 75th anniversary of this tragic event and bring awareness to man-made famine, as well as serve as a reminder of the need to prevent such tragedies in the future. The National Committee is working with the Embassy of Ukraine and the NPS to identify an appropriate location for this Memorial.

Unfortunately, the world has not yet learned the cruel lessons of the Ukrainian Famine and food continues to be used as a political weapon. Apathy and ignorance of history will ensure that the mistakes of the past will be repeated. It is not enough, however, to speak of famine in the abstract. We must cite specific events such as the Ukrainian Famine in order to put a human face on such crimes. To do otherwise, is to dismiss the murder of millions as a mere “statistic.” The permanent memorial in Washington, DC is necessary to continue to tell the story of the Ukrainian Famine to future generations and to reaffirm America's commitment to human rights for all people.

1.4 Planning Process

The planning process for the proposed Memorial began with the enacting of legislation authorizing such a commemorative work. Passed on October 13, 2006, Public Law 109-340 authorized the Government of Ukraine to “establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor the victims of the man-made famine that occurred in Ukraine in 1932-1933” in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act.

The National Committee has also conducted a site selection review of more than 100 potential sites and identified two alternative sites, which are reviewed in this EA. The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission gave their recommendation to two preferred sites on July 9, 2008. As part of the overall planning process, including site selection, environmental review, and design processes, approvals and concurrence will be sought from federal and district agencies as required.

The Memorial authorized by this legislation is intended to honor the memory of the millions that lost their lives as well as serve as a tangible reminder for the need to prevent such tragedies in the future. The legislation authorizes the Memorial as a gift from Ukraine to the people of the United States and specifies that no federal money will be used to build or maintain the Memorial. The goal is for the Memorial site to be dedicated by the 75th anniversary of the Famine in 2008.

1.5 Agency and Public Coordination

As part of the overall planning process for the Memorial, the appropriate agencies have been formally and informally consulted for input, feedback, and scoping. Coordination has included meetings and/or correspondence with the:

- National Park Service (NPS); (lead agency)
- National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC);
- National Capital Memorials Advisory Commission (NCMAC);
- Commission of Fine Arts (CFA);
- District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT);
- District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP); and
- District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO).

1.6 Environmental Issues Assessed

This EA has been prepared to examine the potential impacts associated with the selection of a site for the proposed Memorial with respect to socio-economic, cultural, viewshed, aesthetics, transportation resources, natural resources, and utilities and infrastructure. Through an initial evaluation of potential impacts, including feedback received during the scoping process, the following resource areas were determined to require detailed impact analysis within this EA:

- Visual and Cultural Resources, and
- Visitation.

Due to the location of the sites being considered for the proposed Memorial, several environmental issues were determined not to require further analysis. These include:

- Demographic and Economic Resources, and Environmental Justice;
- Archaeological Resources;
- Water Resources (Groundwater and Surface Water);
- Hazardous Materials; and
- Climate and Air.

1.7 Cumulative Relationship of Nearby Projects

Ongoing and planned projects in the vicinity of the alternative sites could result in cumulative construction and operational impacts when considered together with the effects of the proposed action. Projects in the Downtown East area include the reopening of F Street NW and the development of NoMA

Reopening of F Street NW

A key action identified in the Downtown Action Agenda is the plan to extend F Street and to develop the I-395 Air Rights site, thereby revitalizing and reconnecting the surrounding urban fabric. The plan states: “Office development with active street-level uses should be encouraged to extend eastward along F Street and span the air rights over I-395. This infill office development is the most economically viable approach to creating a continuous corridor of development from Downtown to Union Station.”

Figure 1-1: View looking West down F Street NW



Development of NoMA

The NoMA area is the subject of a redevelopment initiative that aims to transform the historically underdeveloped area into a major, vibrant, mixed-use community that will act to reconnect surrounding neighborhoods. The NoMA planning area covers approximately 358 acres and 50 city blocks much of which is either vacant or slated for redevelopment. According to the NoMa Vision Plan and Development Strategy, the development potential in the NoMa planning area could range between 20 and 26 million square feet.