

Welcome!

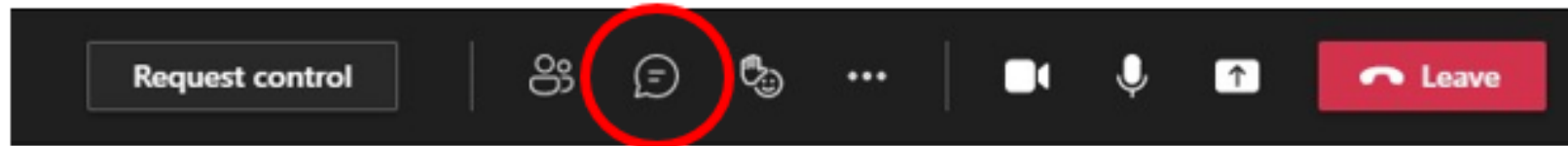
Public Meeting for the Upper Beach Drive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA)

July 18, 2022



Meeting Mechanics

- This meeting is being recorded
- You will be in listen-only mode
- Type your questions at any time into the Chat Box



Open chat box to
Type a comment
Or question.

- We will answer your questions at the end of our presentation as time allows



Questions and Comments

We will not record comments from the meeting chat, so please formally submit your thoughts using our online portal or send them to us by mail.

Online:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/beachdrive>

U.S. Mail:

Attn: Beach Drive EA
Rock Creek Park
3545 Williamsburg Lane, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Comments must be submitted online by 11:59pm or postmarked by **August 11, 2022** to receive consideration.



Agenda

- Meeting Purpose
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) /National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)
- Project Background
- Proposed Alternatives and the Preferred Alternative
- How to Comment
- Questions and Answers



Meeting Purpose

- Describe the existing conditions in the park;
- Present alternatives for the management of upper Beach Drive, including the preferred alternative; and
- Invite your comments.



What is NEPA?

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is part of a planning and decision-making process.
- NEPA requires federal agencies to:
 - Analyze the environmental impacts of federal actions; and
 - Engage the public in the decision-making process.
- The goal is to ensure informed decision-making.



NEPA Planning Process

- Conduct public scoping to determining the range of issues to be addressed and for identifying issues related to the proposed action. Completed in mid-2021.
- Document affected environment, determine environmental consequences, and develop mitigation measures: Completed, spring, 2022
- Prepare EA for public review: Completed, July 10, 2022
- Public Review and Comment: July 11 through August 11, 2022

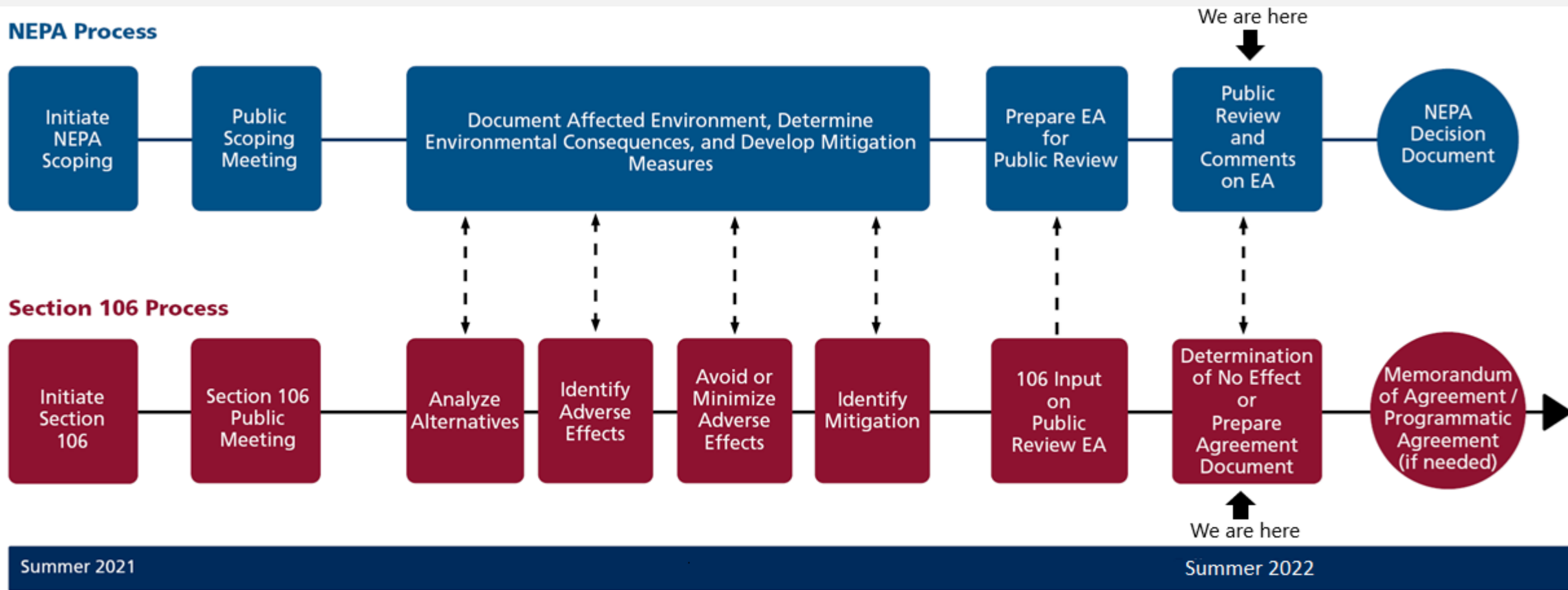


What is NHPA?

- The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) establishes a process (Section 106) for federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places.
- Can conclude in a determination of No Adverse Effect or a Memorandum of Agreement with Consulting Parties.
- The goal is to avoid and minimize potential harm to historic resources.

NEPA + Section 106: A Coordinated Approach

NEPA Process





Environmental Assessment (EA)

Issues and Impact Topics Analyzed:

- Visitor Use and Experience
- Transportation Operations and Safety
- Historic Districts
- Cultural Landscapes
- Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat



Environmental Assessment

Issues and Impact Topics Dismissed:

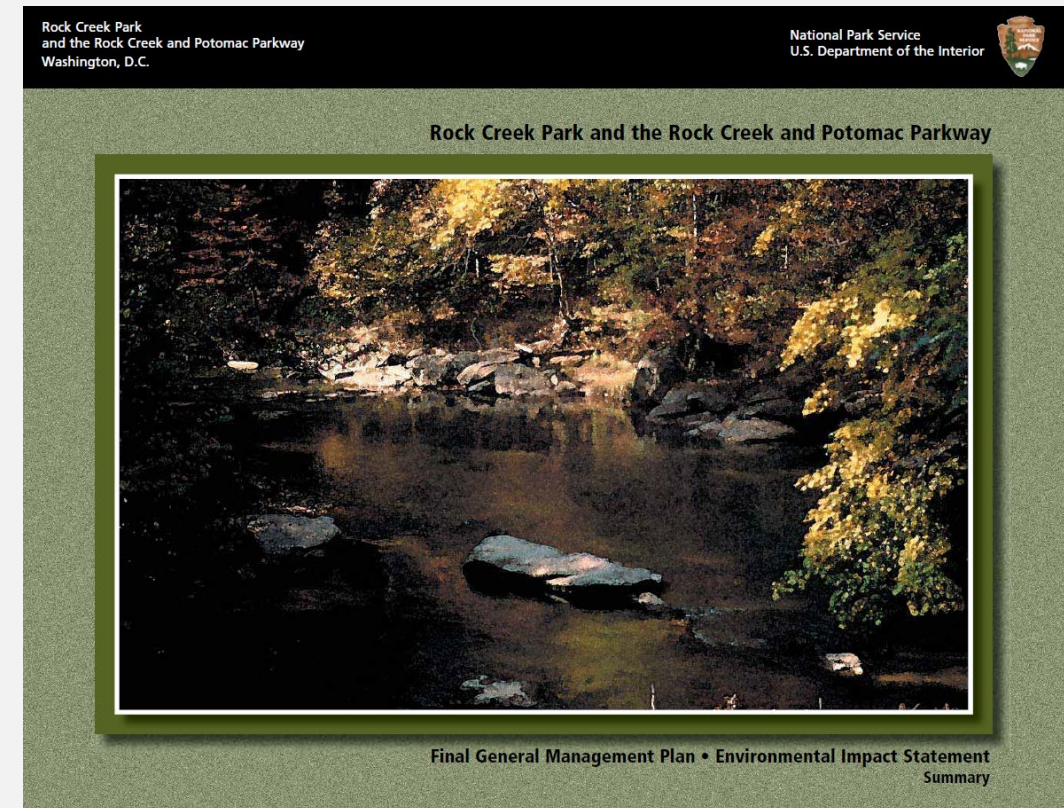
- Air Quality
- Water Resources
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Archeological Resources

Project Background

- Rock Creek Park established by Congress on September 27, 1890.
- Congress specifically authorized construction of driving roads and trails for horses and pedestrians, while mandating that park resources be preserved “in their natural condition, as nearly as possible.”
- First closures for recreation in 1966.
- Grew to include additional sections of Beach Drive and other park roads.
- Closures were extended to include Saturdays and federal holidays.

Project Background: The GMP

- Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP).
- Upper Beach Drive open to motor vehicles on weekdays, and closed for recreational use on weekends, Federal holidays.
- Non-recreational through-traffic would be accommodated in the park.



Cover of Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway GMP, 2007

Project Background: COVID Closures and the Management Plan

- Weekend/holiday closures temporarily extended during COVID public health emergency.
- Undertaken to provide visitors with safe recreational opportunities.
- Park staff observed increased weekday non-motorized recreational use roadways.
- Temporary closures have been extended until September 5, 2022.



Beach Drive NW North of
Military Road NW, 2020

Purpose and Need for Management of Upper Beach Drive

The **purpose** of the plan is to develop a comprehensive management approach for upper Beach Drive and adjacent roadways that accounts for the **needs of motorized and non-motorized users** while **minimizing impacts to park resources**. If existing park management strategies change, this plan will also serve to amend the General Management Plan regarding management of these park roadways.

This plan is **needed** to better understand possible long-term changes in the use of upper Beach Drive and adjacent roadways, and to determine if existing park management strategies need to change as a result.

Alternative 1: Pre-COVID Pandemic Management

Closing the following roadways on weekends and holidays:

- Bingham Drive
- Sherrill Drive
- Beach Drive in three sections: 1) Broad Branch Road to Joyce Road; 2) Picnic Area 10 to Wise Road; and 3), West Beach Drive to the Maryland boundary.

Between Joyce Road and Picnic Area 10, Beach Drive would remain open to vehicles only for the purpose of providing access to group picnic areas and parking lots.

Ross Drive would remain open at all times.



Alternative 2: Full-Time Closure for Recreation

Closing the following roadways year-round:

- Bingham Drive
- Sherrill Drive
- Beach Drive in three sections: 1) Broad Branch Road to Joyce Road; 2) Picnic Area 10 to Wise Road; and 3), West Beach Drive to the Maryland boundary.

Between Joyce Road and Picnic Area 10, Beach Drive would remain open to vehicles only for the purpose of providing access to group picnic areas and parking lots.

Ross Drive would remain open at all times.



Alternative 3: Seasonal Closure for Recreation – NPS Preferred

Closing the following roadways to motor vehicle use between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends, and on weekends and federal holidays after Labor Day and before Memorial Day:

- Bingham Drive
- Sherrill Drive
- Beach Drive in three sections: 1) Broad Branch Road to Joyce Road; 2) from Picnic Area 10 to Wise Road; and 3) from West Beach Drive to the Maryland boundary.

Between Joyce Road and Picnic Area 10, Beach Drive would remain open to vehicles only to provide access to group picnic areas and parking lots.

Ross Drive would be open to vehicles at all times.

Why the Preferred Alternative?

- Allows for greater park access by active recreational users when people are on vacation and when visitation is generally highest, and on every weekend and federal holiday throughout the year.
- Creates safer conditions during the summer by reducing conflicts between motor vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, and provide routes for cyclists, largely free of motor vehicles, between the north end of the Rock Creek Park Multi-Use Trail and the Maryland state line.
- Provides nonmotorized access for persons with disabilities to areas of the park that lack separated pathways and accessible trails.
- Provides for decreased effects to the local transportation network during the period when traffic volumes are highest.
- Provides protection and preservation of wildlife and habitat for several park species, as dense vegetation prohibits visitors' desire and ability to create and use unofficial trails that impact forest habitat.



Impact Summary

	ALT. 1 - NO ACTION PRE-COVID-19 PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT	ALT. 2 - FULL-TIME CLOSURE FOR RECREATION	ALT. 3 - SEASONAL CLOSURE FOR RECREATION (NPS PREFERRED)
Visitor Use and Experience	Nonmotorized users would to be impacted by motorized use of the upper portion of Beach Drive	Nonmotorized users would have increased access in the upper portion of Beach Drive. Motorized access for pleasure driving along the upper portion of Beach Drive would be eliminated, access for pleasure driving would remain along other Park roads	Same as Alt 1 from Labor Day to Memorial Day. Same as Alt 2 from Memorial Day to Labor Day
Transportation Operations and Safety	No new impacts on transportation would occur. Traffic pattern would return to pre-pandemic conditions.	Weekday traffic patterns would change. Several roadways would have some increase in volume.	
Historic Districts	There would be no new impacts on the historic district, as no physical changes would occur.	Impacts on the historic district would be minimal. Any physical changes would be small-scale such as the addition of new signage, gate, and roadway markings.	
Cultural Landscapes	There would be no new impacts on the cultural landscape. No changes would occur to key circulation features, which consist of the roadways and their related features.	Impacts on the cultural landscape would be minimal because of small-scale changes such as the addition of new signage, gates, and roadway markings—all of which would be designed to be reversable and compatible with the historic district.	
Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat	There would be no new impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitats, animal strikes by vehicles would likely continue	There would be beneficial impacts from the removal of motor vehicle access. Increase in recreation leads to an increase of non-sanction off-trail recreation, which could impact wildlife and wildlife habitat within the interior of the Park	



How to Comment

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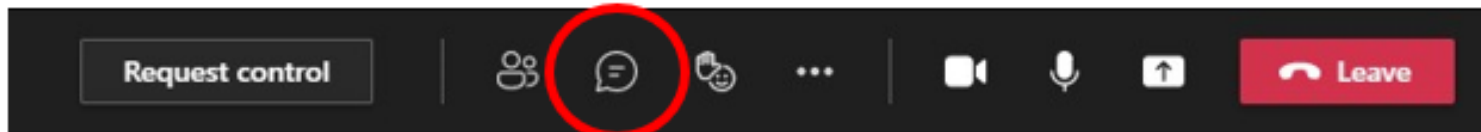
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Thank You