

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER



November 12, 2009

Mr. John Piltzecker
Superintendent
National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Park Service
900 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20024-2000

RE: Proposed Rehabilitation of the District of Columbia War Memorial

Dear Mr. Piltzecker:

Thank you for contacting the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) regarding the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the project information in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and are writing to provide our initial comments regarding effects on historic properties.

The DC SHPO is delighted that the National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to rehabilitate this important memorial to the DC citizens who served and gave their lives in World War I. As you are aware, the original construction of the structure was funded through personal contributions from DC residents and, therefore, the memorial also serves as a symbol of the District and as a source of local pride.

The NPS has been consulting with the DC SHPO on the proposed work for quite some time. Coordination has included the review of the DC War Memorial Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI), submission of project materials, a site visit conducted on October 2, 2009 and the recent provision of public comments received through the PEPC website, all of which were in support of the project. We appreciate the efforts of the NPS to work closely with our office and others on this critical project.

The proposed work consists of repairing and rehabilitating the memorial, the surrounding landscape and the pedestrian circulation paths. Based upon the review of the scope of work and our discussions during the recent site visit, we concur that the work proposed for the memorial itself is appropriate and we look forward to coordinating further regarding the options being considered for replacement and repair of the structure's gutter and internal column drainage system and the replication of the historic vault hatch.

The proposed landscape rehabilitation also appears appropriate in that it will restore the 50' lawn area that originally provided gathering space for the other intended purpose of the memorial – service as a bandstand for concerts. Similarly, the DC SHPO supports the replacement of elm trees that have been lost over time and the selective removal of non-historic trees and other plantings that have inappropriately encroached on the memorial through the years. This approach will not only help to restore the integrity of the historic setting, but also serve to increase awareness of the memorial by making it more visible.

To that end, we recommend that the NPS evaluate minimally damaging landscape treatments (e.g. careful and selective trimming of limbs, removal of minor and/or unhealthy trees and plants etc.) to the north of the site in Constitution Gardens that could help to restore views of the memorial from 19th Street, NW. This is not to suggest that the NPS should consider any action that would result in the removal of or damage to any tree that contributes to the historic Elm Walks.

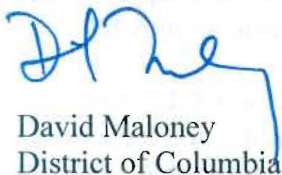
With regard to the rehabilitation of the circulation paths, "Scheme A: 1930's Period of Significance Plan Restoration" is the most appropriate treatment from a purely historic preservation standpoint and we would fully support its implementation. On the other hand, we recognize that some alterations are necessary to address current resource management needs. For example, wider paths may provide improved access for maintenance equipment, reduce damage to the lawn areas and help to discourage social trails. And while gravel would be more historically accurate for the north-south walkways, gravel does present challenges relating to accessibility and maintenance. Therefore, we generally concur with the recommendations outlined in the "Preferred Alternative."

For the reasons outlined above, the DC SHPO concurs with the overall NPS determination of "no adverse effect" for the undertaking, conditioned upon further consultation to refine the appropriate design details such as the choice of replacement stone for the walkways, the appropriate pattern of the stone and other issues relating to the overall scope of work.

We also believe that the welcomed restoration and rehabilitation of the DC War Memorial presents the perfect opportunity to further recognize and commemorate the significance of this important DC icon. Therefore, we are formally requesting the NPS to individually nominate the DC War Memorial to the National Register of Historic Places and offering our assistance and cooperation in this endeavor. We hope that this nomination will facilitate designation of the memorial as a DC landmark in the near future.

We look forward to receiving a response to our request and to working with the NPS to finalize the rehabilitation and restoration plans. If you should have any questions or comments regarding these matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at david.maloney@dc.gov or 202-442-8850 or Andrew Lewis at andrew.lewis@dc.gov or 202-442-8841. Otherwise, thank you again for providing this opportunity to review and comment on this important project.

Sincerely,



David Maloney
District of Columbia
State Historic Preservation Officer

09-310

cc: Frederick Lindstrom, CFA
Nancy Witherell, NCPC