



# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area  
Bushkill, Pennsylvania 18324

IN REPLY REFER TO:

D3013/D18/L7617 (MGMT)

January 10, 2000

## Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Northeast Region

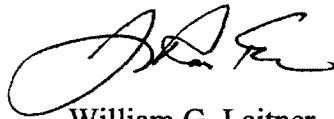
From: Superintendent, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Subject: Record of Decision for the Final Trails Plan/General Management Plan  
Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement

Attached is the subject Record of Decision (ROD) which I recommend for your approval. This ROD represents over two years of planning and public interaction. This plan provides the framework for future trail and related facilities development in the park.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision were reviewed by the Regional Solicitor and the Philadelphia Support Office. Following your signature, the ROD will be published in the Federal Register.

If you have any questions, please call me.

  
William G. Laitner

Attachment

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

TRAILS PLAN  
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT  
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Pursuant to Section 102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190 as amended), and specifically to regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1505.2), the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has prepared the following Record of Decision on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Trails Plan/General Management Plan Amendment for the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DEWA) in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

INTRODUCTION: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, located in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, was established in 1965 by Public Law 89-158 to provide “ for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the proposed Tocks Island Reservoir and lands adjacent thereof...and for the preservation of the scenic, scientific, and historic features contributing to public enjoyment of such lands and water.”

Public Law 95-625, the National Parks and Recreation Act, requires the preparation and timely revision of general management plans (GMP) for each unit of the national park system. The park's 1987 GMP outlined a potential system for trail development that has influenced the location of current trails in the park. Although the GMP continues to be used as a general guide for trail management, it is no longer adequate to address the policy and operational issues now facing park managers.

This Trails Plan/General Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement designates a new integrated system of trails with appropriate visitor support facilities in the park. This plan provides a foundation for future decision making.

BACKGROUND: DEWA is the largest natural area in the National Park System between Virginia and Maine and is among the ten most visited in the entire system. Although the park encompasses 67,000 acres of woodlands, farms, mountains, creeks and the Delaware River, it does not have a designated trail system. Recent concerns about potential impacts on habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species, user conflicts and dissatisfaction with the limited number of trails and facilities prompted park management to recognize the need for a comprehensive trails plan that would address the long-term needs of visitors and still provide the highest level of resource protection.

DECISION (SELECTED ACTION): The National Park Service will implement the proposed action as described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement released December 10, 1999.

This plan designates a parkwide trail system organized into four networks: the Appalachian, Country Road, Gap View and River Valley. Opportunities to explore the park in a variety of ways would be increased. Each network and its collection of trails would focus on a particular visitor experience, provide for specific uses, and promote access to significant park resources. This system would comprise 53 trails totaling approximately 223 miles. Sixty-two trailheads would be formalized, incorporating existing parking areas and comfort facilities. New signage, interpretive kiosks, fencing and appropriate toilets would be installed. This extensive multiple use system would link most of the major facilities together and provide connections to other existing and planned trails outside the park boundary.

The new trail system represents the full potential for trail development in the park within known environmental and resource protection constraints. Trails would receive staff, funds and volunteers for their improvement and development. These trails would be named and recognized by park management and cooperative partners as places to direct visitors. Trails would be located in the most appropriate places, with adequate surfaces, engineering and drainage to promote resource protection and public safety. Accurate information about their location and use would be provided by the park, its partners and in publications. Existing partnerships with committed groups and individuals who volunteer many hours in improving the condition and quality of trails for a diversity of users would be enhanced. New partnerships for development and maintenance of the expanded trails system would be sought.

BASIS FOR DECISION: The draft Trails Plan/GMPA/EIS for DEWA was developed over a two year period with considerable public input. This selected action responds best to the park's mission and goals established for the new trail system because it provides the full range of trail opportunities that the park can support, encourages outside linkages and partnerships, and still provides the highest level of resource protection.

Criteria for trails and systems were developed as a result of public comments on what should be part of a good system, and in response to the trail system goals and the park mission. In addition, other planning considerations included the vision and future development efforts of all neighboring jurisdictions; the use of existing trails and road traces where possible; and the need to accommodate parking and trailheads.

The location, proposed use, and existing condition of specific trails were evaluated to determine their potential to affect natural and cultural resources. Locations of trails were compared to known sensitive areas for various natural and cultural resources. Proposed improvements to present trails or new construction that would potentially impact known sensitive resources were eliminated.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: Two alternatives to the selected action were considered:

1) No-Action Alternative: Continuation of Current Management Practices

Under the no-action alternative, the park would continue to operate without a designated trail system and the overall scope of trail development in the park would not be defined. Thirty-two present trails totaling 112 miles and limited parking facilities would remain. Present park trails and a maze of old road traces and informal trails would not be connected. All new development would be considered on an individual basis and would only occur with the cooperation of a user group or if specific funding was available for construction. Obvious resource degradation would be handled on an individual basis, often by closing the affected section of trail. Unnoticed resource degradation and cumulative impacts, if any, would likely continue. This alternative does not provide adequate trails and facilities for visitors.

2) Independent Networks

The alternative considered would also designate a parkwide trail system and define an overall scope for trail development. It provides a high level of resource protection, but does not best meet the park's mission and trail system goals. It does not provide the best range of trail opportunities nor does it allow the park to connect to facilities outside its boundaries by partnering with neighbors. Independent networks would be organized in 14 small distinct geographic areas that emphasize a specific use and park attraction. There would be limited opportunities for linkages between networks and with trails outside the park. This system would comprise 43 trails totaling approximately 178 miles. Fifty-three trailheads would be formalized, incorporating existing parking areas and comfort facilities. New signage, interpretive kiosks, fencing and appropriate toilets would be installed.

MEASURES TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS AND ADDRESS PUBLIC CONCERNS: The environmental consequences of the proposed action and the other alternatives were fully documented in the DEIS and are re-presented with modifications in the FEIS. The public review period on the DEIS ended October 5, 1999. The results of public comment on the DEIS are included in the FEIS. A majority of comments favored the proposed action. One trail was eliminated because of environmental concerns. Bicycle use was eliminated from Woods Road Trail.

Actions to minimize impacts include using already-disturbed areas as much as possible where development is planned, avoiding sensitive resources, using sustainable design techniques, mitigating resource damage through careful design of implementation procedures, phasing, timing, and other similar actions. When site specific decisions are made that require additional analysis of impacts, more detailed assessments of impacts will be prepared in a separate environmental document as part of the implementation planning.

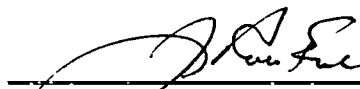
**ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ACTION:** The environmentally preferable alternative is the one that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment. It is the alternative that best protects, preserves and enhances the historical, cultural, and natural resources of the area where the proposed action is to take place.

The selected action best fits the definition and will provide the highest level of protection for natural and cultural resources. Trail improvement and development will focus on disturbed areas, old road traces and existing routes. Sections of trail requiring new construction will be limited and focus on disturbed areas, old road traces and existing routes. Sections of trail requiring new construction will be limited and focus on improving safety and environmental quality. Present park trails will be improved to provide proper drainage and appropriate surfaces to limit encroachment on adjacent vegetation and soil compaction and erosion. Present park trails impacting on sensitive habitats, cultural landscapes or archeological sites will be relocated. Informal trails affecting important natural and cultural resources will be eliminated.


**CONCLUSION:** The above factors and considerations justify selection of the preferred alternative in the Trails Plan/General Management Plan Amendment for the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area as identified and detailed in the final EIS.

National Park Service staff will continue to work with local, state and federal officials, the private sector, and the Congress of the United States to implement the plan.

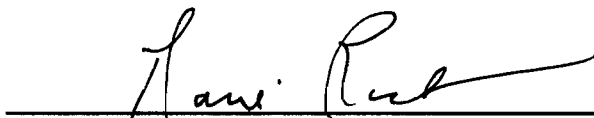
Recommended by:

  
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William Laitner, Superintendent

JAN 18 2000

 Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area  
(570) 588-2418

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marie Rust

JAN 18 2000

Regional Director  
Northeast Region – National Park Service  
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