

# NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

*Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations*

March 26, 2007

Ms. Mary McVeigh  
National Park Service  
Denver Service Center  
12795 W. Alameda Parkway  
Denver CO 80225-0287

Dear Ms. McVeigh:

The following supplements and supplants the comments NPCA submitted on December 26, 2006 during the scoping phase of planning for future use and management of the National Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park. I appreciate Susan Spain's encouragement to provide these supplemental comments.

The following comments are submitted on behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and our more than 330,000 members nationwide. The nonpartisan NPCA is a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated solely to preservation and enhancement of America's national parks.

We commend the National Park Service for beginning this process, and encourage the Park Service to continue to engage the public meaningfully in developing a plan with a compelling and sustainable vision for the National Mall's future.

The National Mall serves as America's "town square," a stage for our ever-evolving democracy. The National Mall is the public face of the nation to many of its 25 million visitors each year. Today's visitor experience can be inspiring and moving, but also frustrating due to poor signage, extensive construction, poorly-coordinated security measures, and a lack of amenities including good food, bathrooms, adequate lighting, and transportation choices. Addressing these infrastructure needs is a necessary component of this plan.

In addition, setting a course for the Mall's long-term future also must be addressed in this plan. The 2003 amendments to the Commemorative Works Act that declared the National Mall a substantially completed work of civic art served an important purpose in recognizing the need to protect the integrity and meaning of the existing memorials and monuments on the National Mall, and the open spaces of the National Mall itself. However, as history continues to move forward, political pressures also will continue to locate new memorials, monuments and museums that commemorate significant people and events on the National Mall.

The last visionary plan for the Mall was developed by the McMillan Commission, an independent body that redefined and expanded the National Mall as a symbol of history and



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democracy. More than one hundred years later, that plan must be updated for the demands of the National Mall's next century.

To meet its goal of developing a long-term vision for how the National Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue will be used and managed, the Park Service must address the following:

1. The plan should address the National Mall's lack of a well-defined and coherent identity, as discussed in the National Capital Region-Central's business plan, published in September 2001 in partnership with NPCA. (Since publication of that business plan, National Capital Region-Central's name was changed to National Mall and Memorial Parks.) A key element of establishing the National Mall's identity that also would greatly enhance the visitor's experience would be to install conveniently located, accessible, up-to-date signage in coordination with other stakeholders on the National Mall such as the Smithsonian Institution.
1. The plan should address potential expansion alternatives in order to meet the needs of increasing visitation and demand for new memorials, monuments, and museums.
1. The plan should address coordination among all relevant entities, including the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the Architect of the Capitol, Department of Agriculture, and the District of Columbia government. For example, no Mall-wide security plan exists, and coordination of security measures among the many entities on the Mall is critically needed.
1. The plan should address management of natural and historical resources, including alternatives for establishing the National Mall as a showcase for energy-efficient and water-efficient technologies, for landscaping where possible using native plants, and for other strategies that demonstrate natural resource stewardship. Some existing elements of the National Mall, such as the non-native ornamental cherry trees that ring the Tidal Basin, obviously are cherished parts of the National Mall's cultural landscape.
1. Given how much of the National Mall consists of filled wetlands, or is underlain by underground creeks, the plan should address potential impacts on resource protection and visitor services from effects of global warming.
1. The plan should integrate and update existing transportation planning to provide convenient and affordable transportation choices for visitors.
1. The plan should consider alternatives for a National Mall "Welcome Center" to provide interpretation for all of its monuments and memorials, displays of artifacts and traveling exhibits, and other amenities.
1. The plan should provide for adequate visitor amenities including good food, restrooms, and places for quiet contemplation. This includes updating the existing infrastructure as



well as adding new facilities. Walkways must be composed of materials that are durable as well as attractive, and that support use by those with physical challenges.

1. The plan should consider alternatives for improving management of the many special events held each year on the National Mall, including strategies for the National Park Service to recover significant costs associated with providing services for the event.
1. Last but not least, the plan should set forth additional means of meaningfully engaging the citizens across the country who care passionately about the National Mall, including visitors, and those whose expertise could be applied to working with the National Park Service and other stakeholders to address management challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment during the scoping period. We look forward to continuing to engage with the Park Service and the public as this process continues to unfold. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-454-3386, or [joakes@npca.org](mailto:joakes@npca.org).

Sincerely,

Joy M. Oakes  
Senior Director, Mid-Atlantic Region

