

## MEMORANDUM

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**Thru:** Marcel Acosta  
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Ash Jain  
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Hillary Altman, Director  
Urban Design and Plans Review Division

**From:** Eugene Keller, Community Planner  
Urban Design and Plans Review Division

**Date:** 12/2/02

**Subject:** Finding of No Significant Impact,  
Washington Monument Grounds Revised Development Concept and Visitor and  
Security Improvements, Between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets and Constitution Avenue, NW  
and the Tidal Basin, Washington, D.C.

NCPC File No. 1303/6152

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Commission review of the National Park Service preliminary site and buildings plans for The Washington Monument Grounds Revised Concept and Visitor and Security Improvements, Between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets and Constitution Avenue, NW and the Tidal Basin, Washington, D.C. is governed by NCPC Environmental Policy and Procedures, in coordination with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

NCPC staff has analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by the National Park Service (NPS) in April 2002, with the Commission acting as a cooperating agency in that effort. Staff has prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact based on an EA, concluding that the analysis is sufficient and demonstrates no significant environmental impacts from the planned action.

The EA reviews two alternatives for developing security measures at the Monument as follows:

- Alternative A (Below-Grade Alternative);
- Alternative B (Above-Grade Alternative)

A third alternative action is the “No Action” (alternative specified as a requirement for NEPA) that is reviewed and evaluated as Alternative C in the EA.

Additionally, several other alternatives have been reviewed and considered by staff, as submitted by the NPS, and evaluated in the context of the information developed by NPS during the NEPA process for this project. A final determination of the potential environmental effects to the Monuments grounds, and associated physical elements including the existing Monument lodge, was completed by the NPS in July 2002.

The two build alternatives are intended to fulfill the security goals and objectives of the National Park Service for the Monument by achieving three types of physical improvements: (1) visitor screening facility, (2) vehicle barrier system, and (3) Grounds improvements.

- **Alternative A** (Below-Grade Alternative) includes an underground screening facility and a below-grade passageway to the Monument. A landscape vehicle barrier system of walled terraces and pathways would be developed at the ground level around the Monument. The Monument Lodge would be rehabilitated as the portal to a new underground visitor screening facility that would include a ticketing/lobby area, a security queuing and screening area, an educational and interpretive area, and other visitor services. A skylight would be installed to allow light into the screening facility and preserve a visual connection to the Monument for users.

In Alternative A, a system of walled terraces 24 to 30 inches high around the Monument would provide a barrier system for stopping moving vehicles. This system would replace the concrete jersey vehicle barriers. A berm, set back approximately 50 feet from the wall west of the Monument, would be used to screen the wall from the west. The existing surface grade of the turf surrounding the Monument would be re-graded to achieve a more uniform slope from various directions. Alternative A also includes improvements to the Washington Monument Grounds to include replacement of concrete at the plaza with high-quality pavers and benches. The walkways would be reconfigured for easier pedestrian flow and would be more accessible for persons with physical disabilities.

The parking lot at 16th Street on the Monument Grounds would be removed, which would allow the German-American Friendship Garden to be completed. The landscape would be augmented with new trees along the primary streets and other locations on the Grounds.

- **Alternative B** (Above-Grade Alternative) includes a visitor screening facility located aboveground near the Sylvan Theater, away from the primary views and vistas. This new facility would replace the existing above-ground visitor queuing area around the perimeter of the Monument plaza, the existing visitor screening facility located in a temporary building on the plaza immediately adjacent to the eastern side of the Monument, and the existing ticket distribution kiosk on the west side of 15th Street at Madison Drive. The new screening facility would consist of two buildings clustered in a less visible and less used part of the Grounds. The buildings would include ticketing and security procedures, an educational and interpretative display, and other visitor services. After visitors are screened, law enforcement personnel would

escort the visitor groups in an above-ground, double-fenced security pathway to a double-locked door to be installed at the entrance to the Monument.

Under Alternative B, security bollards would be placed at the 1.25-mile perimeter of the Monument Grounds to provide a barrier system that would stop moving vehicles, replacing the existing jersey barriers. Alternative B would also include restoration of the Monument Lodge and improvements to the Washington Monument Grounds. The asphalt paving at the plaza would be replaced with grass and a low granite wall. The parking lot at 16th Street would be removed, which would allow the German-American Friendship Garden to be completed.

- **Alternative C** (No Action Alternative) would retain the existing structures and elements of the Washington Monument Grounds in their existing use and condition. There would be no new development or reconfiguration of facilities. Specifically, the No Action Alternative does not involve a return to a previous condition, but involves the continued use of existing temporary measures for Monument security, visitor screening and access, and vehicle barriers. The existing security system, which consists of NPS and U.S. Park Police personnel identifying, grouping, and isolating ticketed tour members in the plaza around the Monument, would continue under the No Action Alternative. At designated times, groups undergo screening in the interim structure located adjacent to the base of the Monument. The existing temporary concrete jersey barrier system would remain and be visible on the Monument Grounds and from West Potomac Park, the Ellipse, and the National Mall. Therefore, implementation of the No Action Alternative would necessitate further efforts to find a suitable replacement for the concrete jersey barriers.

Under the No Action Alternative, paths on the Monument Grounds would remain unimproved in their current locations. The parking lot on the northern portion of the Grounds at 16th Street would remain and the German –American Friendship Garden would not be completed.

Other alternatives reviewed by staff included:

- Visitor screening facility internal to the Monument that comprises of an opening placed in the west wall of the Monument.
- Visitor screening with an underground facility at the Monument base area.
- Visitor screening at the entrance to the existing Monument entrance.
- Vehicle Barrier using bollards internal to the Monument grounds.
- Visitor access by shuttle between a proposed underground visitor facility and the existing monument.

The preferred alternative and proposed action specified for implementation by NPS is alternative A. The Commission staff has reviewed the EA analysis and concludes the environmental effects for alternative A have minimal impacts on environmental attributes of the immediate Washington Monument site area. Important visual effects are essential in comparing the various alternatives and would be addressed through design mitigation actions, particularly in relation to the proposed

skylight as recommended by Commission staff. Consequently, NCPC staff has determined the proposed project review and approval does not require an environmental impact statement, pursuant to NEPA, because no resources are significantly impacted by either the intensity of the action or its context. This means that the consequences of the approval action for the project were analyzed relative to several circumstances as a whole (both human and natural environment), the affected interests, and its local effects. Additionally, the potential intensity of impacts was examined by NCPC staff through the submission and analysis process of the Commission to include:

- The potential effects on topography and soils that can be attributed to either Alternative A or Alternative B would not be increased by either the project itself or other projects in the general area. The geology of the Monument Grounds would not be affected by development of either Alternative A or B. Several ongoing and proposed projects have been identified in the vicinity of the Washington Monument Grounds that could potentially involve temporary dewatering. However, the proposed security improvements at the Monument under Alternative A or B would not require dewatering and would not contribute to cumulative effects on groundwater. Overall, there would not be cumulative impacts on geophysical resources.
- The proposed improvements to the visual environment of the Monument Grounds under Alternative A that would include the replacement of the temporary security measures on the Grounds with attractive landscape treatments and terraces, removal of the 16th Street parking lot, removal of the incompatible addition to the Monument Lodge, and the completion of the German-American Friendship Garden. These are minor and positive impacts.
- The effects regarding the re-grading, placement of retaining walls, and the location of the underground connecting corridor to the monument from the below-grade screening area that would not adversely impact the aesthetic and cultural values of the Washington Monument site and will be further reviewed and coordinated in the NHPA Programmatic Agreement process that includes consultation with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (DC-SHPO), ACHP, NCPC, and concurring parties to ensure that the undertaking will meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes. This process will include:
  - NPS continuing the project's engineering design to ensure that excavation and construction through the foundation will be conducted without harm to the Monument's integrity.
  - The additions to the Monument Lodge will be installed in a manner that allows it to be reversible with minimum damage to the historic fabric of the structure.
  - Ground surfaces and planting materials that will be of the highest quality and appropriate to the historic precedents of the Monument's site.
- Development of Alternative B that would have visual impacts due to proposed features such as the perimeter bollards and the double-fenced security pathway containing a glass-like

barrier. These impacts, while adverse, would be somewhat offset by the removal of the temporary security measures from the Grounds, and the removal of the 16th Street parking lot on the Grounds, but because of their qualities, they are incongruent with existing features of the grounds, the Monument, and its operations. Alternative B would have a greater visual impact on the Monument and Grounds, resulting from the security pathway and barrier, and a minor cumulative effect on visual resources in the vicinity of the Monument Grounds.

- Health and safety implications of the alternatives that have been analyzed by the U.S. Park Police, in consultation with the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of State, the security consultants of Booze-Allen Hamilton, and Applied Research Associates. Identification of security goals of the proposal and the potential added risks to the government facilities and its visitors to achieve implementation of security measures has been acknowledged. These considerations include:
  - The interaction of visitors with security personal and the Monument during public usage.
  - The protection of screened visitors to the Monument in a manner that does not allow interaction with unchecked individuals.
  - The location of the screening area to the perimeter entry point of the facility.
  - The prevention of the transport or delivery of explosive, hazardous, or toxic materials to the visitor screening area.
  - Through the use of a managed visitor program, ensuring a limit to the number of individuals present within the controlled or risk areas of the monument at any reasonable time period.
  - The assessed use of programmable intrusion equipment to alert security personnel of the exact location of any unauthorized intrusion.
  - The potential introduction of a chemical sensor program.
  - Installation closed-circuit television (CCTV) and motion detection alarms.

The protection activity for the federal monument is believed to present no greater risk to the public at large than that which would be experienced at the Capitol Building's new visitor center, now under construction, or the daily exposure of the public to underground operations of Washington's Metrorail subway system that thousands of visitors enter each day. These underground facilities all implement security protection measures that include significant reinforcement of structural components, isolation of occupied areas, air quality monitoring, security personnel patrols, and additional visual monitoring of user activity to protect the public's health and safety. Adverse risk exposure does exist in these controlled underground environments but is not deemed extraordinary or beyond those encountered in many public venues. Moreover, it is believed by federal law enforcement officials that the opportunity to carryout a planned attack underground is logistically much more difficult,

assumes much greater probability to be discovered, and can be respond to and contained by law enforcement agencies quickly.

- With the development of either Alternative A or Alternative B, existing tours and interpretive opportunities would continue to be available to the public at the Monument and at nearby museums and memorials. Under Alternative A, the proposed underground screening facility and landscape security improvements would alter the visitor experience at any initial start of a visit to the Monument interior by necessitating the use of the screening facility, but careful and appropriate design implementation to minimize any adverse perception on the part of visitors would be achieved in the detailed interior design. Potential adverse impacts for some visitors from accessing the Monument through an underground facility would be mitigated by the added benefits of new facilities to utilize, protection from the elements, and added interpretive functions. Alternative B does involve a minor increase in access distance to achieve the tour of the monument interior and exposes the tour participants to weather.
- Development of Alternative A or Alternative B that would have effects which would not significantly contribute to cumulative adverse impacts on water resources, vegetation, hazardous materials, air quality, noise, land use, recreation, or transportation aspects of the Monumental Core.
- Review of the alternative actions has revealed the potential presence of contaminated soil at the Washington Monument site. The EA review of the soil samples revealed levels above the EPA non-residential standards for arsenic at three boring locations. Within the near-surface soils at these locations, arsenic levels were slightly above the EPA non-residential standard of 3.8 mg/kg. Two contaminants, arsenic and benzopyrene (a volatile organic compound), were detected at elevated levels at other site locations. Arsenic was recorded at about 1 to 4 mg/kg at near surface depths in six boring locations, which is above the EPA residential risk-based level of 0.43 mg/kg. Benzopyrene was measured at one location at 0.594 mg/kg, which is above the EPA residential standard of .087 mg/kg. Since the proposed construction and operation of Alternative A at the Monument Grounds would not demonstrate residential characteristics, contamination levels in the soil samples were compared to the EPA's risk-based standards for contaminant levels at both non-residential and residential thresholds.

The existing structures on the Monument grounds were built during periods when hazardous substances such as lead-based paint were employed in finishes. Since the proposed action may involve altering these structures in some manner, hazardous materials have the potential to be released. Human exposure to these contaminants may present a health hazard. Therefore, permitting and disposal of the hazardous materials as hazardous wastes in compliance with the District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration, Hazardous Waste Division and the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs requirements will be achieved.

Under the authority of Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) arsenic and arsenic compounds are regulated as the hazardous constituent(s) in several listed hazardous

wastes (EPA 1997d). Under the provisions of the District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration, Hazardous Waste Division, and the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, a permit to remove and dispose of the contaminated soil during the construction permitting process would occur. Depending on the permit review process, the contaminated soil may potentially meet on-site disposal criteria if it can be demonstrated by NPS that the disposal would remove any potential for exposure to human contact and would not significantly impact ground water. Should removal of the contaminated soil be required, a commercial hazardous waste disposal company would be contracted by NPS to transport and dispose of the soil in a permitted landfill outside of the District of Columbia. A hazardous waste manifest would accompany each shipment of contaminated soil from its loading point to discharge point. The NCPC staff concludes it would best serve the interests of the government to remove the limited areas of contaminated soil from the Monument site, and is stipulating to NPS compliance with the Commission policy which states: "All hazardous wastes and toxic substances (those already so designated as well as those suspected) should always be disposed of in the safest manner in accordance with national, state, and local regulations". The removal would promote the safest and least controversial course of action.

#### *Public Comment on the EA*

The Commission has received limited direct comments concerning the EA. As the lead federal agency, NPS has provided copies of the comments (approximately 53) submitted to them in response to the EA extended review period that closed June 21, 2002. In summary, the following main themes of the public review period indicated:

- A majority of commentors do not support an underground visitor facility at the Washington Monument. Many object to the perceived change to the visitor experience attributed to the underground visitor facility in the preferred alternative.
- Although there was sufficient interest expressed about the de-stabilization of the monument, many expressions demonstrated misunderstanding of the alternatives and their exact dimensions, location, or intent.
- At least five commentors indicated the lack of sufficient detail, the identification of other alternatives, or the need for further analysis within the EA and requested the further preparation of a formal environmental impact statement (EIS).

The National Coalition to Save Our Mall submitted a letter on June 17, 2002, that the alternatives discussed in the EA were not varied and reflective of the plans or ideas suggested by various comments provided during the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement meetings. Additionally, the remarks of the letter assert the following, which were common points, made by commentors:

- The EA does not adequately identify historic properties affected.
- The EA does not identify the project's design and misrepresents the design.
- The EA does not identify and analyze physical, cultural and visitor impacts, including regulations intended to treat mobility-impaired persons.

The Coalition letter referenced twenty-two other specific concerns with the NPS NEPA document.

While acknowledging the Coalition has identified limitations of the EA, the Commission staff does not believe the EA, as a brief and concise document that is drafted to meet the objectives of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for a report on determining whether significant impacts exists; is fatally flawed or deficient. When evaluated as a whole, the Commission believes the document presents information that reflects a level of data adequate for Commission use and that meets the goals of the NEPA process as required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Moreover, as the CEQ stresses, the document is to serve as an informational gathering effort that should not duplicate detailed analysis. As stated in its guidance issued to agencies in 1981, "since the EA is a concise document, it should not contain long descriptions or detailed data which the agency may have gathered. Rather, it should contain a brief discussion of the need for the proposal, alternatives to the proposal, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a list of agencies and persons consulted. Section 1508.9(b)." <sup>1</sup>

Additionally, judicial reviews of the EA/NEPA process have found that NEPA requires agencies to study, develop and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources, and that the examination of alternatives is bounded by the rule of reason for which the level of analysis should be commensurate with the severity of impacts. No argument by the Coalition addresses a contention of alternative use of resources, only the method or design of the planned use or the perceived lack of information. Further, the contention that the severity of an impact may exist does not make it supportable if no substantiated information is provided. The protest makes no explanation of any information regarding unresolved adverse impacts on resources. The Coalition discussion offers conjecture concerning effects, or the perceived lack of information and suspicious intent. However, the EA *does* present definitive and resolved mitigation statements regarding potential effects commensurate with the level of impact anticipated. Consequently, the staff finds the arguments of insufficiency, unsupported.

Moreover, the remark of alleged informational gaps does not prove that data provided is inadequate. Court reviews have found two important points regarding NEPA documentation. Judicial reviews have determined that "NEPA does not demand that every federal decision be verified by reduction to mathematical absolutes for insertion into a precise formula."<sup>2</sup> and that it is not arbitrary or capricious for a government agency to rely upon observations and informed opinions.<sup>3</sup>

Commission staff finds the analysis and EA record does include sufficient information to allow decision makers to review the potential environmental effects of the proposed alternatives, and to understand the significance of their potential impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National environmental Policy Act Regulations – This memorandum was published in the Federal Register and appears at 46 Fed. Reg. 18026 (1981). March 16, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Sierra Club v. Lynn, 502 F.2d 43, 61 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1974)

<sup>3</sup> United States Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit, Apr 25, 2002. The Utah Shared Access Alliance and Anthony Chatterley, v. United States Forest Service and Mary Wagner, Forest Supervisor of Dixie National Forest, et al, appeal from the United States District Court of the District of Utah (D.C. No. 99cv0349c)

Other issues identified by comments during public review of the EA included the following general areas:

- Consideration of other viable alternatives. The current document reviews the installation of physical improvements that involve visitor screening, vehicle barriers, and landform and grounds alterations. Several visitor screening and vehicle barrier improvements were considered as alternatives by NPS and are discussed within the EA as “alternatives considered but eliminated” at Section 3.5 of the EA. Additionally, receipt and review by NPS has been accomplished on other options to the alternatives considered that include:
  - Visitor screening facility internal to the Monument that utilizes an opening placed in the west wall of the Monument. This reopening of a portal, achieved in the context of the original historical opening that existed between 1848 to 1853, would achieve a one-way visitor circulation pathway through the Monument in association with the use of screening equipment and blast doors. This alternative was deemed unacceptable by NPS because it does not meet the minimal security objectives of the project and presents both internal space conflicts and risks when having the screening activity within the Monument itself.
  - Visitor screening with an underground facility at the Monument base area. This option would be situated beneath the plaza and would connect to the Monument by a passageway through the foundation. The passageway and a portion of the connection would include the ticketing, bathrooms and queuing space that would surround the base of the Monument to balance potential adverse loading of the foundation area. An above ground component of an exterior pavilion would contain elevators, stairs and screening equipment and exist outside the Monument. From a security standpoint the configuration is acceptable but the structural risk, extra cost of incremental excavation, and the visual intrusion of the above ground pavilion has resulted in NPS concluding this alternative is not feasible.
  - Visitor screening at the entrance to the existing Monument entrance. This alternative would place a new building on the east side of the Monument that would provide ticketing, and screening. Additional program facilities would occur in an underground facility beneath the Monument Lodge. Tickets would likely be issued at both the Lodge and the Monument. Because the screening is near the Monument, at a point readily accessible to full movement into the structure, it is minimal in acceptance from a security standpoint, but more importantly has visual and aesthetic intrusion issues relative to the impact on the plaza. Consequently, NPS believes the alternative is not viable.
  - Vehicle Barrier using bollards internal to the Monument grounds. This option essentially consists of an alignment of bollards encircling the Monument within the grounds of the national monument. This proposal was reviewed by both the Commission of Fine Arts and NCPC in 2001 and was disapproved by both review bodies.

- Visitor access by shuttle between a proposed underground visitor facility and the existing monument. This scheme would include the use of an above ground transfer vehicle to move visitors from a staging point at the visitor facility to the Monument. A separate 8-foot wide travel way for the vehicle would be constructed paralleling the walkways of the grounds. The shuttles would run at 3½-minute intervals and could return visitors to their initial point at the visitor facility if they desired. To establish redundancy, in case of breakdowns and maintenance of headway times, at least five vehicles would be required. Both the Monument and the Lodge would require secure entrance/staging areas to preclude improper boarding of vehicles. NPS, in considering this scenario believes the vehicles and the alignment of the roadway are significant intrusions into what has been established as a pedestrian environment. Additionally, operation logistics, maintenance, and staff requirements make the proposal incur significant costs, which cannot be recovered due to NPS policy of free access to the Washington Monument. The other aspects of noise from vehicles, the disruption in the required steps to board and unload, and the visual impacts, make this alternative unfeasible.

NPS in its development of a final NEPA determination cites that it has considered the implications of the full range of alternative improvements suggested by the EA process.

- Consideration of additional technical information. Preparation of the EA was conducted in full coordination with the professional engineering and design teams performing the specific and detailed technical studies of geology, soils engineering, and structural foundation analysis. Preliminary data and analysis was available and utilized in the EA. The refined information now presented by the teams supports and further substantiates the information presented in the EA. The available studies include:
  - Subsurface Investigation, Monument Grounds and Visitor Facility, Washington Monument, Washington, DC produced by Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers on June 10, 2002. This data presents the same information to an extended and additional detail as that appearing in the EA. Furthermore, the report presents recommendations to be used in the final design and implementation of the structural and landscape improvements to the Monument grounds. The information is similar and in keeping with the detailed recommendations from the Mueser Rutledge 1973 report presented in the EA.
  - An analysis of foundation issues by structural engineers and a preliminary cultural landscape report and historic resources report. The findings of the reports indicate no potential to affect sensitive foundation elements of the Monument beyond those already identified and discussed in the EA.
  - A July 2002 peer review report of the foundation issues presented by the above structural engineering report. The peer review, which was completed in late July, was further reviewed by the project engineers, and responded to clarifying points of soil pressure loading by the various elements of the proposed design. The findings of the final peer review of October 30, 2002, concluded the initial structural analysis and soil engineering design conclusions for the project are

valid and that differential rebound to the monument foundation would be at approximately 0.0024 inches. Six recommendations of the peer report have been incorporated into the project preliminary design process and will be further implemented in the final project design and construction.

- Perceived safety and security inadequacies. NPS in responding to the expressed comments of inadequate security implications of the proposal requested the U.S. Park Police, in consultation with the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of State, Booze-Allen Hamilton, and Applied Research Associates reviewed and identified the goals of the proposed Monument Grounds and Visitor Facility proposal. Those goals are:
  - Screening visitors at a remote location away from the Monument to create maximum distance between the first interaction with security personal and the Monument.
  - Delivering screened visitors to the Monument in a manner that does not allow interaction with unchecked individuals to prevent the illegal transfer of weapons or explosives into the Monument.
  - Preventing vehicles from approaching the Monument to preclude the transport of large loads of explosives to the structure itself.

The identified objectives of the U.S. Park Police serve as a benchmark for analysis of security issues in recognizing that this entity is responsible for security performance and protection activity for federal monuments under the management of NPS. In the context of the objectives, the solutions proposed meet the objectives of:

- Effectively protecting the structural integrity of the Monument.
- Physically removing visitor screening to the maximum distance from the Monument.
- Separation of screened visitors from contact with unscreened individuals.

### *Mitigation Actions To Be Implemented*

Mitigation actions accomplishing the project, through the NCPC project review process, are listed below as associated with the attribute resource potentially affected:

#### **Soil and geotechnical resources**

In compliance with the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs permitting regulations, and the *1987 Standards for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control*, erosion and sediment control measures will be implemented to avoid or minimize the potential for sedimentation and contamination impacts to surface waters due to development of the proposed project.

- To reduce the potential for erosion, and to accelerate the reestablishment of vegetation, disturbed or denuded areas will be revegetated.

- To further reduce the potential for sedimentation and contamination impacts to surface waters, proposed impervious surface features such as walking paths will be designed to minimize surface area to the extent practicable.
- The NPS design team, prior to initiation of construction, is undertaking detailed geotechnical analysis and calculations during final project design. Cut and fill amounts will be balanced to minimize the need for import or export of soil.
- To minimize the potential for compression in the clay substrate of the Monument, the cut and fill of soil will be designed and implemented to result in no substantial net change in soil loads surrounding the Monument. Structural additions to the Grounds will be designed to result in no net change in localized soil loads during construction or operation of the facilities.

### **Surface Water**

- The existing materials storage for the Corps of Engineer's flood control plan will not be disturbed or removed during construction or operation of the proposed development.
- To further reduce the potential for sedimentation and contamination impacts to surface waters, proposed impervious surface features such as walking paths will be designed to minimize surface area to the extent practicable

### **Vegetation Resources**

- During construction, heavy equipment will be strictly confined to areas of proposed development to limit the disturbance of vegetation to the minimum necessary to meet project objectives.
- To reduce the potential for erosion, and to accelerate the reestablishment of vegetation, disturbed or denuded areas will be revegetated upon completion of construction operations.

### **Hazardous Materials**

- Contaminated soils identified within proposed areas of soil cut would be carefully removed, transported, and disposed of, in accordance with applicable Federal and District of Columbia regulations for handling contaminated materials. This is particularly important in the context of the near-by location of the Potomac River floodplain and the potential variability of density in project soils. This stipulation acknowledges, however, that the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and the Department of Health have final approval authority regarding measures involving soil contamination.
- Excavated soil requiring removal to an offsite remediation and disposal facility would be coordinated with the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and the District of Columbia Health Administration. Contaminated soil would be properly treated and disposed of in an approved facility in compliance with Federal and District

guidelines. Overall, development of Alternative A would provide the opportunity to improve potential adverse soil characteristics at the Grounds created by previous filling operations.

### **Historic Resources**

Pursuant to a Programmatic Agreement, the NPS will continue to consult with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (DC-SHPO), ACHP, NCPC, and concurring parties to ensure that the undertaking will meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes.

- NPS will continue engineering design to ensure that excavation and construction through the foundation will be conducted without harm to the Monument's integrity.
- The additions to the Monument Lodge will be installed in a manner that allows it to be reversible with minimum damage to the historic fabric of the structure.
- Rehabilitation of the Monument Lodge will be achieved in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.
- Ground surfaces and planting materials will be of the highest quality and appropriate to the historic precedents.

Staff finds the mitigation actions are sufficient except for one additional issue of project design implementation. Staff offers the recommended additional action regarding soil modification to balance any monument grounds soil density (if required). The soil amendment should be carefully reviewed to determine any adverse erosion coefficient change to the soil as well. Soil erosion challenges are often overlooked in soil modification and can lead to detrimental maintenance issues. This concern is presented in the Commission's staff report on the preliminary design of the project and would be addressed by NPS in the final design submission provided to the Commission.

After reviewing the EA, NCPC staff has concluded that the proposed project does not require an environmental impact statement. Construction and operation of the Washington Monument Grounds Revised Concept and Visitor and Security Improvements would not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment, socio-cultural resources, transportation, parking, or utilities systems. Construction activities would have minor adverse effects on noise, the visual environment, vehicular traffic, pedestrian traffic, and parking; however, these effects would be of short duration and would not result in long-term effects on these resources.

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the final EA, dated April 2002, and is incorporated by reference. Additionally, this opinion has been arrived at in considering not only the NPS developed EA but also the subsurface investigation information compiled by NPS project consultants in May 2002 and information provided to NCPC in late August and November 2002. All information in the EA, as independently reviewed by NCPC staff, has been determined to adequately address the environmental issues and impacts of the proposed project.

Staff has reviewed the action for extraordinary circumstances as sanctioned by NEPA and recommends to the Executive Director adoption of the prepared EA as provided in Section 1500.4 (n) of the Council

on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, and a determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in accordance with the Commission's procedures.

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS, PERMANENT SECURITY  
IMPROVEMENTS,  
BETWEEN 14<sup>TH</sup> AND 17<sup>TH</sup> STREETS AND CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NW  
AND THE TIDAL BASIN  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Commission's Environmental Policies and Procedures, I have reviewed The Washington Monument Grounds Revised Development Concept and Visitor and Security Improvements, Between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets and Constitution Avenue, NW and the Tidal Basin Washington, D.C., as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.42(73.10)-41047. Further evaluation by the Commission staff has established that no significant environmental effects will derive from the improvements as analyzed in the Environmental Assessment prepared by the National Park Service, with the Commission serving as a cooperating agency, and dated April 2002. Consequently, I have adopted the prepared EA as authorized under delegated authority, and have determined that Commission approval of the proposed project would not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act and complies with the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508).

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Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP  
Executive Director

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC AVAILABILITY

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### **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

#### THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS, PERMANENT SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS

Between 14<sup>th</sup> And 17<sup>th</sup> Streets And Constitution Avenue, NW  
And The Tidal Basin, Washington, DC

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December 16, 2002

Following adoption of an Environmental Assessment (EA), prepared by the National Park Service, for The Washington Monument Grounds Revised Development Concept And Visitor And Security Improvements, Between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets and Constitution Avenue, NW and the Tidal Basin, Washington, DC, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). As stated in the FONSI, NCPC staff has determined that the project would not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment. The FONSI and the EA have been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Environmental Policies and Procedures implemented by NCPC.

Requests to review the FONSI or the EA may be made to the Commission. All written statements regarding the FONSI must be received by the Commission no later than December 24, 2002, and addressed to Eugene Keller at the National Capital Planning Commission, 401 Ninth Street, NW, Suite 500, North Lobby Washington, D.C. 20576.