

PRESS RELEASE



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NCPC Joins Federal and Local Agencies to Discuss Improvements to the National Mall Flood Protection System

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) will meet Friday, May 23 with the National Park Service (NPS), the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office (DCSHPO), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regarding potential improvements to the existing flood protection system on the National Mall.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that Federal agencies consult about potential adverse effects to historic properties and to develop steps to avoid, minimize, or mitigate such effects. This will be the first public meeting focused on the Section 106 process. The proposed modifications to the flood protection system are necessary to meet new standards of reliability for flood control measures required by USACE and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

NCPC has taken a leadership role in identifying the District's flood risks and examining potential risk mitigation strategies. The Commission has been working closely with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the DCSHPO, as well as NPS, USACE, and the District's Office of Planning on interim levee modifications and permanent design alternatives to ensure Washington, DC is protected in a flood event.

"Protecting the Federal Triangle Area and downtown District from flooding is a priority," said Marcel Acosta, NCPC executive director. "NCPC supports efforts to identify interim and permanent flood measures to protect federal assets and the downtown business district, while respecting the historic landscape of the National Mall."

After severe flooding in the Federal Triangle in June 2006 exposed the hazards of excess stormwater, NCPC and other federal and local agencies convened a flood forum to assess flooding risks in the monumental core and to better plan for coordinated emergency response. NCPC also issued the *Report on Flooding and Stormwater in Washington, DC* that examined the dual risks of river flooding and inadequate sewer capacity. The report includes data on the city's flooding history and suggests ways that NCPC's planning, review, and approval authority could facilitate strategies to reduce future flooding risks.

Since 1936, Washington has been protected from river flooding by a levee that runs along the Reflecting Pool on the National Mall, which includes a temporary closure across 17th Street. In 2006, the USACE failed to certify the levee, citing it as unreliable and difficult to construct. As a result, federal and local officials are working on an interim solution that would protect the downtown federal and business districts.

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NCPC has been instrumental in efforts to explore and resolve flooding risks in the monumental core and surrounding areas, and is a consulting party on the flood protection system. As the central planning agency for the federal government in the region, NCPC will review flood control projects that will be located on federal property.

Friday's meeting is from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the 4th Floor Conference room of the D.C. Office of Planning's Historic Preservation Office, located at 801 North Capitol Street, NE. This initial meeting will address present conditions and the potential effects to historic resources at 17th Street, NW, West Potomac Park, and the Washington Monument Grounds. Another public meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2008.

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

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