



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Delaware Water Gap
National Recreation Area

Middle Delaware National
Scenic and Recreational
River

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Delaware Water Gap NRA Press Release

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National Park Service Releases Final Visitor Use Management Plan for Delaware Water Gap and Middle Delaware River

BUSHKILL, PA- This morning the National Park Service (NPS) released the final Visitor Use Management Plan (VUM Plan) for Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River. The VUM Plan is the culmination of a 5-year planning effort that began in summer 2015 and included a great deal of time, energy, collaboration, and input by neighboring town governments, chambers of commerce, industry partners, communities, stakeholders, NPS staff, and the public. The VUM Plan is available on the park's website at <https://www.nps.gov/dewa/getinvolved/planning.htm>.

"We thank the public for sharing their feedback with us and for their continued involvement throughout the planning process. The VUM Plan was revised with our visitors and stakeholders and not just for them. We asked and we listened." said Superintendent Sula Jacobs. The revised VUM Plan fulfills the purpose and need for the plan and the mission of the National Park Service; it also provides a guide for the protection of the significant natural and cultural resources of park while also increasing access to high-quality recreational experiences for the public.

The development of the VUM Plan was informed by three rounds of public and stakeholder outreach, review, and comment. The planning team received 830 correspondences during the Draft VUM Plan public review and comment period from October 1 to December 1, 2019. A summary of substantive comments that were of high importance to the public and the NPS responses to those comments can be found in the Public Comment Report which is available at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?projectID=55912>.

"This plan reflects adaptive management strategies, flexibility, and continued public engagement," added Jacobs. Implementation of individual plan components will be based on the availability of funds and some will require additional public review and input. Park staff will monitor changes and impacts to park resources and visitor experiences at locations throughout the recreation area using the indicators, thresholds, and site capacities identified in the VUM Plan.

Some adaptive management strategies are already being piloted in the park including the mobile or pop-up visitor center approach which brings park staff out of the visitor centers and into the park where they can reach more people; the closure of unofficial visitor-created trails at Raymondskill Falls to limit crowd sizes and protect park resources while providing safe and high quality visitor experiences; and

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establishing new traffic patterns to increase parking capacity at Kittatinny Point on busy weekends. The park has also begun assessing the feasibility of a permit program for hunters with disabilities including limited administrative road access and accessible hunting blinds.

Highlights of the VUM Plan include the following:

- **Entrance Fees:** Based on public feedback, the NPS will not move forward with the proposal to charge a parkwide entrance fee. The park will continue with the current expanded amenity fee structure and additional park sites may be included as amenity fee sites in the future. The park will seek stakeholder feedback when new amenity fee sites have been identified and before implementing fees for additional sites.
- **Revised Timelines:** Timelines for actions where implementation was dependent on entrance fee revenue have been extended to reflect reduced revenue projections based on changes to the fee structure in the revised VUM Plan.
- **Trails:** Improvements to the park's trails will link trail networks, enhance accessibility, and diversify trail experiences and will be sustainably designed to protect park resources. Partnership and cost-sharing opportunities will be explored related to equestrian and biking trails.
- **Picnicking:** Expanded picnicking opportunities will be implemented in a variety of locations throughout the park to better meet demand, including designated areas that can accommodate large groups. Hidden Lake is one area that may be evaluated for use as a group picnic area; other expansions or improvements could take place at park beaches.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Several projects in the VUM Plan are intended to increase and improve accessibility to facilities and programs throughout the park. Projects include improvements to the Loch Lomond and Hidden Lake fishing piers and trails; canoe/kayak access points with launch aids; improved online and virtual services; audio descriptions on waysides at Childs Park and Dingmans Falls; ramp access to key public buildings; trail improvements; and a permit system for hunting access.
- **River Camping:** River camping is one of the more unique experience offered at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and on the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River. The NPS will move forward with charging a \$16 per site, per night fee and establishing a reservation system for use of the river campsites. Implementation will be phased in over time, beginning in 2021. The park will continue to maintain existing river campsites; pilot alternative waste management solutions at two river campsites; and restore up to 20 river campsites in clustered groupings using creative solutions for human waste management, improved accessibility for people with disabilities, and ease of access for maintenance. Education about Leave No Trace® principles and water safety will be promoted to increase resource protection and human health and safety practices in the outdoors.
- **NJ River Access:** NPS will seek funding for a NJ river access study to determine the feasibility of developing a new river access on the NJ side of the park and/or the expansion of existing sites. The study will identify whether suitable locations are present and identify



potential locations for further investigation. The initiation of this study will be contingent on the availability of funding.

“This plan has been heavily influenced by input from the park community and has changed based on their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. The park will use this plan as a guide in future decision-making, relying on the science, data, and the strong community voice reflected in it to ensure this park remains an important haven,” said Superintendent Jacobs. “We will continue having conversations with the park community as we move forward with individual plan strategies, some of which will require additional public review and feedback. As a result of this planning process, we hope the public will trust that we are listening, that all their voices and ideas are important to us, and that they will continue to be engaged in dialog with us about their national park.”

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About the National Park Service: More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America’s 421 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov.