

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

E. Keller



NCPC File No. 5856

**ROCK CREEK PARK
MAINTENANCE YARD AND FITZGERALD TENNIS CENTER,
RENEWAL OF APPROVAL FOR VERIZON WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS
FACILITIES**

(Two Monopoles with infrastructure, transmitting and receiving)
Glover Road and 16th Street and Morrow Drive, NW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the National Park Service

September 2, 2004

Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted a request for renewal of the approval for two wireless telecommunications facilities in Rock Creek Park at the Fitzgerald Tennis Center and the Rock Creek Park Maintenance Yard. These facilities provide coverage and capacity for Verizon Wireless (previously Bell Atlantic Mobile) within Rock Creek Park, generally south of Military Road. In November 1999 the Commission approved these facilities to operate for a period not to exceed five years. That approval expiration will occur in November 2004. The current submittal requests renewal of the approval for a time period of ten years, as allowed by the Commission's procedures.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the renewal application for preliminary and final site and building plans for wireless telecommunications facilities (two monopoles with antennas and infrastructure) in Rock Creek Park, at the Maintenance Yard and at the Fitzgerald Tennis Center, Glover Road and 16th Street and Morrow Drive, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 3.70(38.00)-41426, for a period not to exceed five years.

Requires the National Park Service to complete both the telecommunications plan study and the Park Service's study and monitoring program for migratory birds before requesting additional approval extensions for the Fitzgerald Tennis Center or the Rock Creek Park Maintenance Yard telecommunications facilities. Both studies have been found to be necessary to maintain operation

of the current wireless telecommunications facilities as noted by the National Park Service's Finding of No Significant Impact, dated June 18, 2003. As part of this requirement, the Commission directs the Park Service to provide a brief status paper and schedule of both studies to the Commission no later than one year from the date of this Commission action.

Recommends the National Park Service seek a partnership in accomplishing the studies from its permit applicants to assure telecommunication carrier involvement in determining technical feasibility of future telecommunications locations that may affect Rock Creek Park.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted a renewal request for preliminary and final site and building plans for the existing Verizon Wireless installation of two monopoles, each with an antenna array of 9 panel antennas, currently located in Rock Creek Park. Each panel antenna is 53 inches by 14 inches, mounted in a candelabra design array. Additionally, an ancillary maintenance structure is provided at each monopole site, at ground level, for switches and other electrical components. One monopole is located at the Fitzgerald Tennis Center (FTC) and the other antenna site is located at the Rock Creek Park Maintenance Yard.

The renewal proposal requests a ten year Commission approval period for the review as specified at Section 1 of the Commission's Guidelines and Submission Requirements for Antennas on Federal Property in the National Capital Region approved in August 2001.

Maintenance Yard Site

The Maintenance Yard is a 30-acre complex that is bounded by Military Road on the north, Ross Drive on the south and east, and Glover Road on the west. The complex includes one-story garages and sheds for storage of maintenance equipment, a 50-car parking lot, park offices, and storage space for topsoil, sand, trail surfacing material, stone, and other building materials.

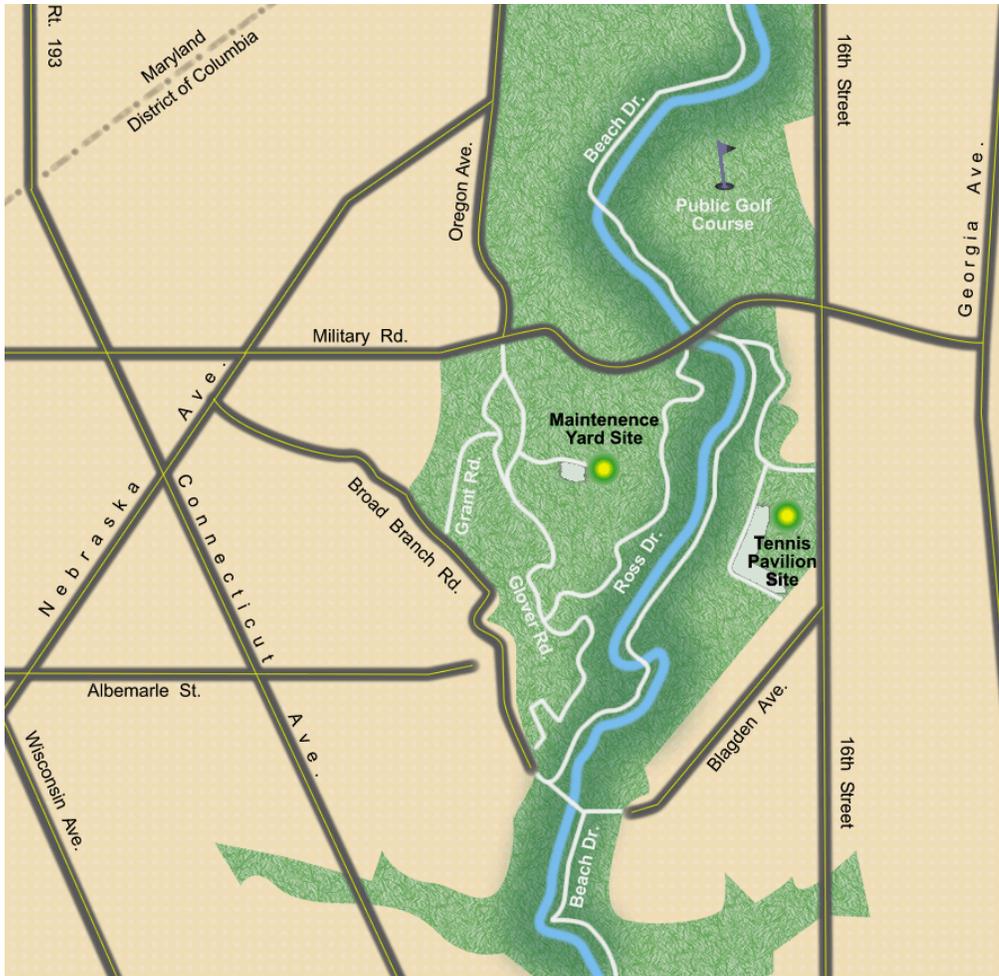
This complex is located on a hilltop within an upland deciduous hardwood forest on the west side of Rock Creek Park. It is divided into an upper and lower terrace area, with a 30-foot height difference between the two areas. The proposal maintains the existing 130-foot monopole, which is placed within the trees near the maintenance yard entrance at the upper terrace. The antenna's candelabra design array of 9 panel antennas is situated at an actual height of 128 feet.

Tennis Center Site

The Tennis Center is bounded by Morrow Drive on the north, the Carter Baron Amphitheater parking lot and a wooded area on the south, 16th Street on the east, and Picnic Grove No. 23 on the west. The center consists of a 7,500-seat stadium and 25 practice courts. Approximately 90,000 people use the practice courts annually. The center shares a large parking lot with the Carter Baron Amphitheater. Other features of this site include recreational fields on the north, deciduous hardwood forest surrounding the west and south sides, and a residential neighborhood across 16th Street.

The stadium has four 100-foot light poles and numerous 38- and 50-foot light poles that provide illumination for the tennis activity at this site. The existing monopole features a 100-foot pole on the southwest corner of the southern practice courts. The existing court lights are mounted at the 38-foot level and the cellular antenna array with 9 panel antennas is mounted at the 100-foot level.

No changes are proposed to any site or location aspect of the two existing monopole installations.



PLAN INDICATING EXISTING LOCATIONS OF THE TWO TELECOMMUNICATIONS MONOPOLES WITHIN ROCK CREEK PARK

Background

In November 1999, the Commission approved two monopoles for use as wireless communications facilities to serve the general vicinity of Rock Creek Park. The National Park Service submitted the original proposal for locating the monopoles and their supporting infrastructure in accordance with President Clinton’s Executive Memorandum of August 10, 1995. The memorandum directed

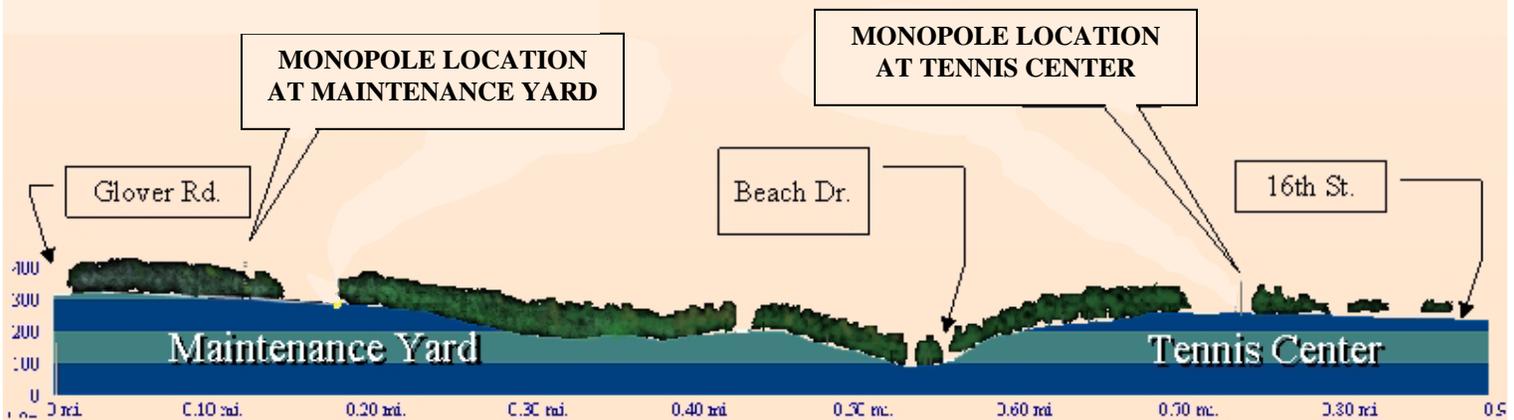
federal agencies to facilitate the siting of wireless telecommunications facilities on federal property. At that time in the review of the proposal, the General Services Administration's development of implementation guidelines called for federal departments and agencies to take steps to assure that they fully support the siting of commercial antennas on federal property, as long as the placement of these antennas did not directly conflict with the agency's mission.

Proposal

The current submission is a renewal request of the previous approval with no change in the location, configuration, or operation of the existing installed monopole antennas. The Park Service renewal request, however, is specifying an approval for ten years as allowed by the Commission's procedures.



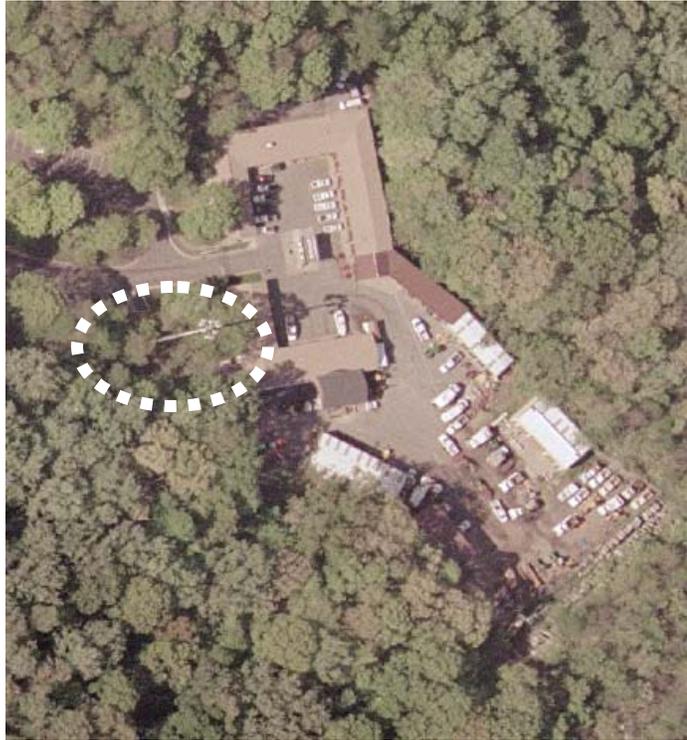
SECTION LOCATION AND DIRECTION



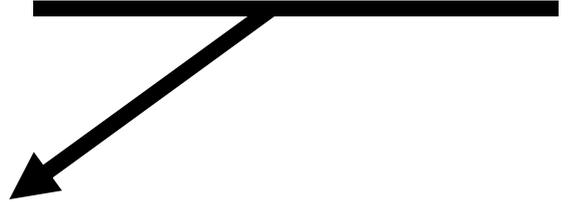
This cross section is from Glover Road (left) through to 16th St (right)

SCHEMATIC ROCK CREEK PARK CROSS SECTION SHOWING LOCATION OF MONOPOLES (NOT TO SCALE)

**AERIAL VIEW OF
MAINTENANCE YARD SITE
WITH MONOPOLE LOCATION
INDICATED**



**AERIAL VIEW OF TENNIS
CENTER SITE WITH MONOPOLE
LOCATION INDICATED**



Development Program

Applicant: National Park Service

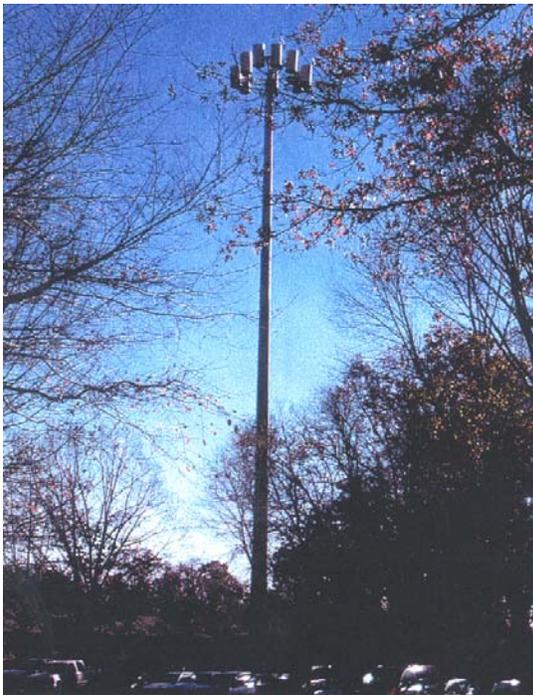
Estimated Construction Cost: None. No change or modification of the existing construction is planned.

Completion Date: The renewal of the right-of-way permit involves an existing facility that will not be modified in its operation, except as allowed under Park Service guidance. The possible renewal of the Commission's approval to maintain the telecommunications facilities is anticipated to take effect at the time of Commission's final action at its scheduled monthly meeting. The Park Service permit extension is effective November 2004 or as soon as possible thereafter.

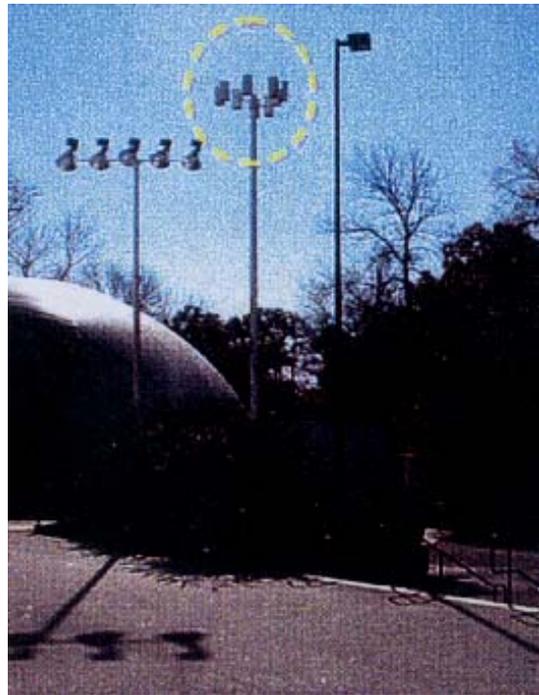
COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item and on August 18, 2004, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.



**EXISTING MONOPOLE
AND ANTENNAS AT
MAINTENANCE YARD**



**EXISTING MONOPOLE
AND ANTENNAS AT
TENNIS CENTER**

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The current submission reflects a standard request for renewal of the approval to operate cellular telecommunications facilities on federal property. Staff has determined that the renewal application is consistent with the previously approved plans. No changes are proposed by monopole antenna operators. The Park Service application specifies that no changes or improvements are required to the installations, and they would remain as currently constructed and operate in the existing manner by Verizon Wireless.

The Park Service renewal submission asks for a ten year approval period. Staff review finds all requirements of the previous approval and current requirements are being met and continue to be satisfied. The submission identifies that no technological advances or operational changes in any currently available alternative wireless communication system would permit elimination of the monopole installations. The application further identifies that the White House Communications Agency has evaluated their need and use of the communications facilities at Rock Creek Park and has determined those facilities essential to Presidential and federal government communications.

Staff recommends **approval** of the submitted renewal request **with conditions** based on the application data indicating additional studies regarding future monopole installations, and other issues, are underway.

In June 2003 the National Park Service completed an updated Environmental Assessment (EA), at the direction of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, evaluating the potential impacts to the human and natural environment from two existing cellular communications towers located within Rock Creek Park. The selected alternative and finding of the Park Service resulting from the EA allows the continued operation of the two wireless telecommunications facilities as presently located, *with the Park Service developing* a park-wide telecommunications plan and a monitoring program for migratory birds (see attached EA Finding of No Significant Impact). It is clearly evident that the decision to continue operation of telecommunications facilities within Rock Creek Park was arrived at in conjunction with the determination that the additional studies were to be achieved.

Staff finds the outcome of the pending studies may provide valid information for the Commission to consider regarding the monopole installations, and other potential telecommunications facilities, associated with Rock Creek Park when they are available. Consequently, the staff believes a commitment to a lengthened renewal interval for these specific telecommunications facilities should not be endorsed until the results or recommendations of the two park plans are achieved. However, it is clearly identifiable that the commercial communication services provided by the monopoles and their antennas fulfill purposes available to the federal government. Thus, staff recommends the approval renewal period should remain at five years for these particular facilities at Rock Creek Park.

Park Service officials have specified that all committed-to studies identified in the June 2003 Finding are actively underway. However, both studies must succeed in securing further funding to move forward. The scope and alternatives for a telecommunications plan are being internally

reviewed by the NPS preparing offices in Colorado and will be shortly submitted to NPS upper management for funding consideration. The Plan must then be fully developed with funding actions identified for further approval by the Rock Creek Park officials, including the Park Superintendent.

The monitoring program for the migratory birds, potentially associated with both Rock Creek Park and other NPS telecommunication facilities throughout the nation, is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other specialists within NPS. That study program has just had its scope defined and research protocols established and approved. The next step, according to NPS officials, will be to have an upper management review of the proposal and funding identified to develop the required studies and accomplish the monitoring Plan.

Staff is recommending the Commission highlight to the Park Service that completion of the two necessary studies will be expected prior to further extension of the right-of-way permit for the telecommunications facilities. Furthermore, pursuant to the Commission's authority to limit any approval extension if circumstances warrant; the telecommunications facilities renewal approval should not exceed five years.

CONFORMANCE

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Park Service had developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed preliminary and final site and building plans for the wireless telecommunications facilities in 1999 and in 2003. The Park Service issued a Finding of No Significant Impact on the proposed action on April 7, 1999 and an updated Finding in June 2003.

Verizon Wireless has certified that its facilities would meet the Federal Communications Commission standards for radio-frequency exposure, that the facilities would not interfere with police radio communications, and that the cellular radio installations would not constitute a health hazard.

No significant environmental effects are anticipated as a result of the continued operation of the facilities at the present locations. Two mitigation actions have been committed to by the National Park Service in its 2003 environmental determination: preparing a telecommunications plan and the development of a monitoring program for migratory birds.

National Historic Preservation Act

The Rock Creek Park Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

The National Park Service has determined that the proposed project will have no effect on the Rock Creek Park Historic District. On August 3, 1999, the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer found that the antennas would have no adverse effect either from the historic

viewsheds of the park or on archaeological resources. The Park Service, consequently, concluded its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Comprehensive Plan

The existing monopoles and antennas currently exist within Rock Creek Park, which is designated as a Natural Park in the Parks, Open Space and Natural Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Applicable policies in this element that relate to the protection of this park specify:

- Natural Parks...should be established, protected, and maintained to insure the conservation and enhancement of the significant Natural Features of the National Capital.
- Rock Creek Park and its tributary parks in the District and Montgomery County should continue to serve as important Natural Parks, retaining existing topography, indigenous plant materials and other natural conditions providing Open Space amenities for residents and visitors...The borders of the park should receive special protection from adjacent development which could cause erosion or adverse visual impacts.

Rock Creek is also a national landmark property and is located within a Historic District at Sixteenth Street, NW, which parallels the park on its east side.

Staff finds the existing monopoles would remain located at their present positions, and by doing so, limit the impacts of the antennas on park operations and thus be consistent with goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Requirements of the Park Service's permit continue to minimize visual impacts from the antennas within the park as well as on the Washington skyline as observed from outside the park by maintaining their existing approved height. Renewal of the monopole antenna approval assures protection of the park's integrity by limiting the presence of such structures to the approved locations only.