

U. S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM
RECONFIGURATION OF FERN VALLEY (NATIVE PLANT COLLECTION)
3501 New York Avenue, NE
Washington, D.C.

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

July 27, 2006

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I approve the preliminary and final site development plans to construct new accessible pathways, two overlook structures, and pedestrian bridges at the Fern Valley area of the U.S. National Arboretum, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 43.20(38.00)-42067.

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The Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for alteration of the existing Fern Valley; an area of 6.5 acres of woodland and native plant materials that represent the plant ecology of a northern forest, piedmont, southern mountains, and south lowland/coastal plain.

The purpose of the project is to renovate the area to provide improved accessible paths within the Fern Valley, and modify the alignments and materials of the existing pathways, to coincide with the re-design of the area in accordance with the Arboretum Master Plan approved by the Commission on November 2, 2000.

The plans for enhancements include a new entrance area to the Fern Valley to the west, six new pathway bridges, way finding signage, and upgraded footpaths crossing the stream area of Fern Valley. A portion of the pathway will involve a raised wooden walkway over the area's stream lowlands, and uniform wooden benches to replace existing benches. Additional efforts include improvement and diversity of plants on display, and the development of new collection areas in the context of the overall design. Reduced parking also will be implemented at the area due to its close walking distance relationship to the planned future Education and Visitor Center.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed and coordinated the proposal at its July 12, 2006 meeting. The project involves no occupiable buildings and would have no adverse impact on

land uses or environmental resources of the general site. No major vegetation removal is required to accomplish the proposal.

The Department coordinated the project's review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office and concurrence for this project was reached on February 9, 2004. In conformance with NCPC project submission requirements and USDA NEPA compliance procedures, the Department completed an environmental assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for the project, as part of the master plan that identified and reviewed the modernization project, in October 2000. NCPC has reviewed the environmental assessment and has determined that it is sufficient to support a review of the pathway and various pedestrian bridge modifications of the current project. Based on the October 2000 environmental assessment, NCPC's Executive Director is issuing a finding of no significant impact for this project.

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director