

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6265



LINCOLN MEMORIAL TEMPORARY VEHICLE SECURITY BARRIERS, EAST SIDE WASHINGTON, DC

Submission by the National Park Service

August 28, 2008

Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for the location and design of a temporary vehicle security barrier on the east (Mall) side of the Lincoln Memorial. The temporary barrier will remain in place across the center line of the memorial at the outer edge of Lincoln Memorial Circle until a more comprehensive landscape plan for the western portion of West Potomac Park can be undertaken and implemented. At its December 2007 meeting, the Commission approved final plans for the location and design of two lines of bollards comprising most of the east side security barrier, as well as the associated repaving and improvements of Lincoln Circle itself. At that meeting, the National Park Service informed the Commission that it intended to return to the Commission with the design and location of a temporary barrier line across the center of the east side (across the Mall axis) and that it planned to complete the improvements to the plaza and the security barrier construction in time for the bicentennial celebration of President Lincoln's birth in February 2009.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §8722(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves preliminary and final site development plans for a temporary vehicle barrier across the lower approachway at the center of the east side of Lincoln Memorial Circle, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.44(38.40)42594, for a period not exceeding two years, consistent with the Commission's approval of temporary physical security measures.

Welcomes and supports the National Park Service’s goal of a comprehensive design initiative for the east front of the Lincoln Memorial that will include consideration of design concerns, maintenance problems, accessibility, and security needs in West Potomac Park, especially in the area of the lower approachway stairs and the Reflecting Pool.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Lincoln Memorial was sited by the McMillan Commission and designed by one of Charles McKim’s protégés, architect Henry Bacon. Built between 1914 and 1922, the national memorial to President Lincoln is the western terminus of the extended Mall and the focal point of West Potomac Park. The Reflecting Pool and Rainbow Pool were designed by Bacon, who collaborated closely with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. They were constructed between 1922 and 1924. Olmsted had been a member of the McMillan Commission and was sitting as the landscape architect on the Commission of Fine Arts during that time. Olmsted later served as a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from 1926 to 1932.

Background and Previous Commission Actions

The temporary vehicle barrier around the Lincoln Memorial is part of a comprehensive plan for improvements at the Lincoln Memorial, reviewed and approved by the Commission between 2003 and 2007. Most of these improvements have been constructed. They include roadway and sidewalk reconstruction; the reconstruction and paving of Lincoln Memorial Circle; the installation of vehicle barriers around the memorial, including a retaining wall around the inner edge of the western portion of Memorial Circle and bollards around the outer edge of the eastern portion of Memorial Circle except across the approachway; and the construction of two concession buildings.

In July 2002, for the east side vehicle barrier, the Commission approved a barrier location (proposed by Laurie Olin, sometimes referred to as “the landscape solution”, and illustrated in the Urban Design and Security Plan) that consisted of bollards and retaining walls below Memorial Circle descending the lower stairs to the Reflecting Pool level.

In December 2003, NPS changed its preferred barrier location and submitted a bollard line at the outer edge of Memorial Circle. The Commission did not approve this location, instead recommending the development of an alternative that minimized the visibility and extent of the unbroken line of bollards.

In March 2005 the Commissioners made a site visit to study a mock-up of bollards in various locations on the plaza—the inner and outer edges of Memorial Circle crossing the Mall axis, as

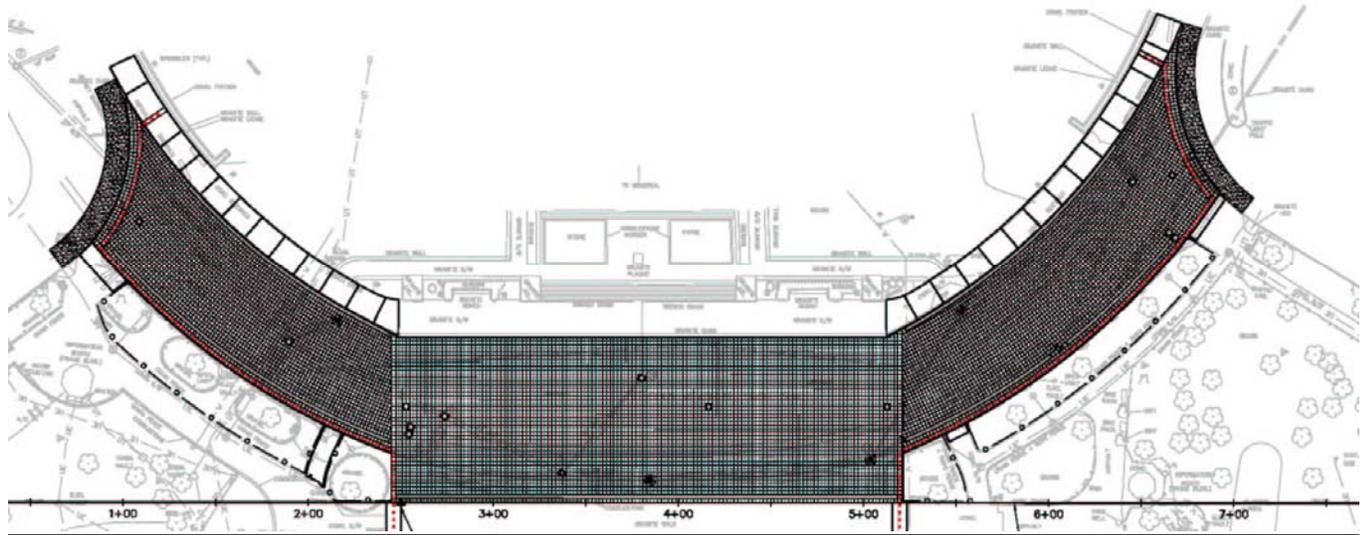
well as locations for the barrier line to cross the circle. The juncture of the retaining walls with the access ramps was also studied.

At its April 2005 meeting the Commission approved a revised concept design for a bollard line near the base of the memorial stairs (near the inner edge of the Circle).

At its July 2005 meeting, following a reassessment by the review agency staffs of the 2002 landscape scheme, the Commission approved a revised concept submission. The changes in the 2005 submission were that the descending bollards were planted inside hedges and that bollards rather than retaining walls were used at the bottom of the stairs.

At its October 2005 meeting, the Commission approved preliminary site development plans for the concept approved in July 2005, and asked for further development of the bollard design.

At its December 2007 meeting, the Commission approved final site development plans for bollards around the outer curb of Lincoln Memorial Circle, acknowledged NPS's intention to submit a plan for a temporary barrier line across the center axis, and accordingly rescinded the Commission's previous preliminary approval of the location of bollard lines descending the approachway stairs.



December 2007 Action:

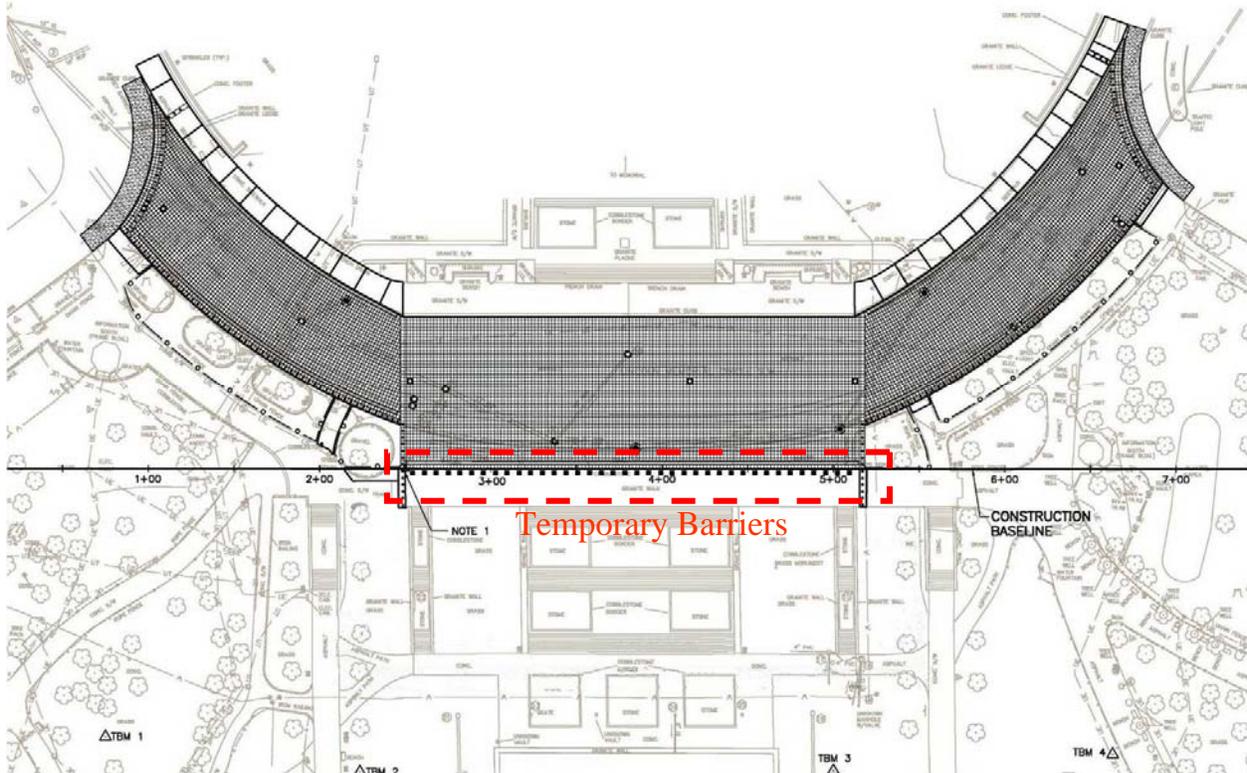
In December 2007 the Commission gave final approval for the installation of 250 bollards, 125 on each side, across and around the outer edge of Lincoln Memorial Circle, moving eastward and ending at the top of the lower stairs (the head of the lower approachway). The submission included the final plans for the repaving and improvements to the circle roadway, creating a plaza facing the Mall. The construction will be completed in time for the bicentennial celebration of Lincoln's birth in February 2009. (North is to the right of the page.)

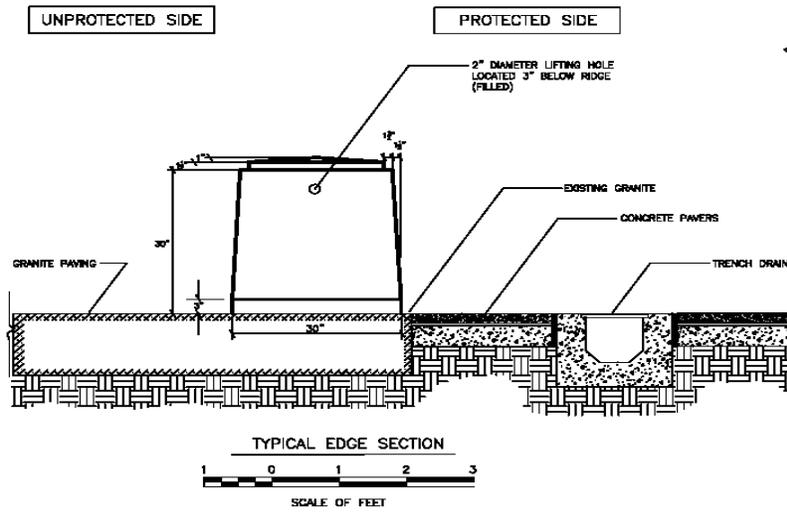
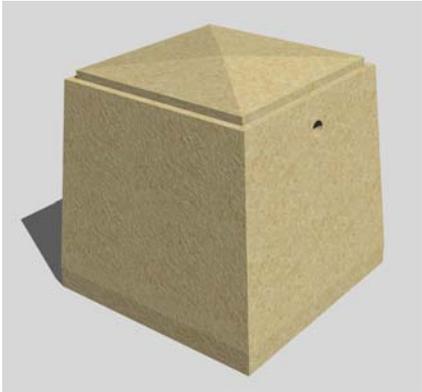
The National Park Service stated in a letter of September 27, 2007 that it proposed:

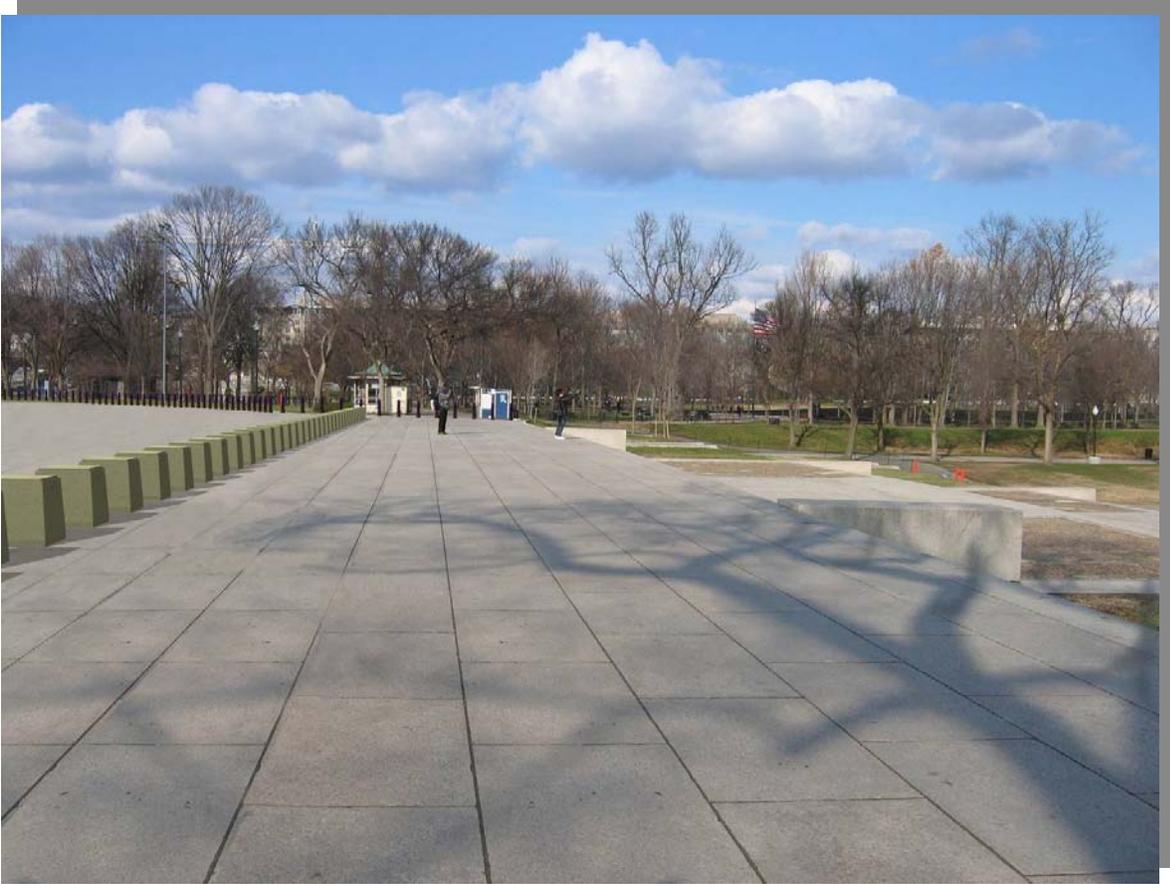
- Seeking funds for “specific security additions on the lower approachway, as well as aesthetic, operational, and maintenance concerns, accessibility, and general visitor safety in the area extending from the proposed plaza along the Reflecting Pool to the World War II Memorial. As a result, the NPS has determined the need to see a comprehensive, integrated design for this area that addresses these issues and also minimizes the effects to historic resources. This new look on the part of the NPS would involve significant improvements to the existing stairs, terraces, Reflecting Pool, the elm walks and associated lighting, the asphalt walks connecting the elm walks and the lower plaza, and the ‘social’ paths that parallel both sides of the pool. The NPS will retain a new design team to assist the service in the development of a comprehensive design for this area overall.”
- Placing “temporary barriers to secure the lower approachway.”

Proposal

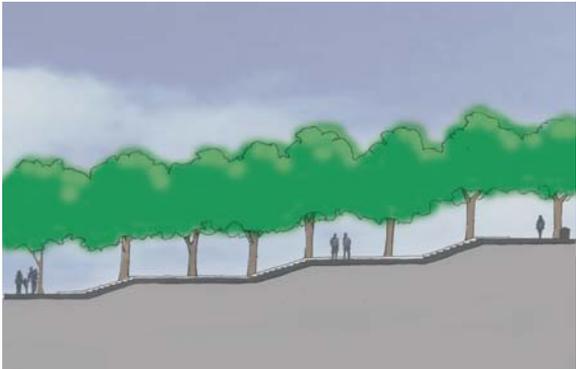
The current proposal is to install a barrier at the outer edge of the Circle consisting of 43 blocks, each measuring 30 inches in width and breadth and 32 inches in height at a center peak. They will be lifted into place and not pinned to the surface and, thus, are reversible. Each weighs approximately one ton. Of concrete with an exposed aggregate finish, the barriers will be placed to provide 4 feet of clear space between them. A range of colors, aggregate mixes, finishes, and forms was reviewed in meetings and studied in the field with staff from the review agencies and consulting parties as part of the Section 106 consultation in Spring 2008.







Renderings illustrating the proposed temporary barrier line across the eastern side of Lincoln Memorial Circle, at the top of the lower approachway stairs. (The illustration to the right reflects the Commission's 2007 action to rescind its prior approval of bollards descending the stairs.)



PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff recommends preliminary and final site development plans for the design and location of the temporary barrier line. The staff recommends approval for the two-year period normally accorded proposals for temporary physical security barriers. The National Park Service must resubmit the proposal to the Commission within two years and will inform the Commission at that time, if not earlier, of progress in the plans for designing and implementing comprehensive improvements in the western end of West Potomac Park.

The temporary barriers will form part of the Lincoln Memorial barrier system in West Potomac Park for at least several years under the most optimistic circumstances while a comprehensive landscape plan is developed, approved, funded, and constructed.

In the staff's view, NPS has successfully achieved its design objectives for the temporary barrier. Given the significance and visibility of the memorial at the western terminus of the National Mall, NPS will fabricate temporary barrier elements that have been designed specifically for the site, taking into account the warm granite of the approachway and the view and dominance of the memorial itself. The warm tones and relatively fine grain of the aggregate is intended to complement the original Milford Pink granite of the approachway. The simple massing of the blocks is intended to avoid competition with the forms of the Memorial while the refinement of the block edges and top is intended to respond to the formal monumentality of the site. At the same time, the material of the blocks is intended to indicate a temporary rather than a permanent feature.

Each block weighs approximately one ton. The blocks will be lifted into place and not attached in any way below-grade or to the surface. The adverse visual effects of the blocks will be reversed when they are removed at a future date when the comprehensive plan is implemented. The bulk of the blocks results from their weight and the fact that their strength does not derive from a below-grade connection. The 30-inch blocks (with a 32-inch finished height at the center peak) are designed and will be fabricated specifically for this site. They are markedly shorter and narrower than other temporary barriers, usually planters, customarily used at other locations. Given the significance of the memorial and its Mall setting, the visibility of the barrier blocks, and the uncertainty about the timeframe for their presence at the site, an appropriately designed temporary solution is necessary. Staff commends the Park Service for a barrier design that is suitable for the memorial as a temporary measure and that will be completely reversible in future because it will not cause an alteration of the original granite.

NPS has continued to consult under the terms of the 2003 Memorandum of Agreement. A range of options for the design and location of the barrier blocks was discussed in a series of three consultation meetings with Section 106 parties and staff of review agencies. The final consultation meeting occurred on April 25, 2008 at the site, where a range of material samples and a mock-up of the barrier was studied and agreed upon. The consultation occurred under the terms of the 2003 Memorandum of Agreement for improvements at the Lincoln Memorial, including security barriers.

The staff continues to welcome the National Park Service's proposal to seek funding for the initiation of a comprehensive landscape plan for the lower approachway and for the Reflecting Pool and the east-west axis of West Potomac Park and the National Mall that would incorporate security, as well as maintenance and preservation of historic fabric and resources, accessibility, and lighting, among other objectives. The new design should take into account proposed security needs and improved accessibility.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The following are the applicable policies in the *Preservation and Historic Features Element* of the Comprehensive Plan:

National Capital Image

1. Express the dignity befitting the image of the federal government in the national capital.
5. Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed, that are an integral part of the national capital's image.

Stewardship of Historic Properties

5. Identify and protect both the significant historic design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open spaces.

The Historic Plan of Washington, DC

2. Promote continuity in the historic design framework of the nation's capital by protecting and enhancing the elements, views, and principles of the L'Enfant Plan.
5. Protect the reservations that contain historic landscapes and features from incompatible changes or incursions.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposed security barrier for the Lincoln Memorial in the 2002 *Urban Design and Security Plan* indicated a retaining wall around the north, west, and south sides of the inner edge of Lincoln Memorial Circle, which has been constructed. The *Plan* proposed a barrier line of bollards around the circle to the head of the lower approachway stairs, as approved in December 2007. The 2002 Olin scheme showed descending bollards on the stairs to the Reflecting Pool level. The current scheme shows temporary bollards at the head of the stairs.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Commission's review of NPS's plans for the Lincoln Memorial East Side Perimeter Improvements is governed by NCPC's Environmental Policy and Procedures, in coordination with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Executive Director issued a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) on November 17, 2003, based on adoption of the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) issued by the National Park Service for the project. NCPC staff's review of the document concluded that the analysis was sufficient and demonstrated no significant environmental impacts from the planned actions examined by that analysis and where similar in extent, location, and impact to the current proposed action. The preferred alternative of that EA analysis was constructing a retaining wall behind the existing sidewalk beginning at Daniel French Drive on the south side of the Lincoln Memorial and continuing around the west side, to the north side, and ending at Henry Bacon Drive. Metal bollards would close the line between Bacon and French Drives to the east.

The conclusion of the environmental review considers the mitigation efforts established under the Memorandum of Agreement, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which establishes important provisions to the proposal in the context of effects to historic resources. The MOA determined that the best location to avoid impacts was along the outer edge of the Circle, incorporating the lower approachway.

NPS has reviewed the National Park Service's EA with regard to its current submission, stating that the proposed location of the temporary interim barriers is similar to the line of protection that was analyzed in the EA. "The interim, temporary barriers project does not propose changes to the environment that were not anticipated by the 2002 EA and the 2003 FONSI. There are no new significant circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns. Therefore the analysis of effects covered in the EA is consistent with the proposal for the interim, temporary barriers."

Further, regarding the proposed location and design temporary barriers:

They were developed through the Section 106 process and in accordance with the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The concrete selected for the barriers was chosen for the historic context and cultural landscape setting of the Lincoln Memorial. The specific shape, color, and texture are designed to blend in with the design of the memorial, the existing stonework, and the adjacent paving. In addition, the proposed barriers are somewhat shorter than the security bollard approved for the East Side Security Project and this lower height mitigates some of the visual effect of a line of barriers in the center section of the new plaza area. The barriers will be easily placed on the pavement, fit in with the hardscape edge of the plaza area, and have less impact on the landscape features near and next to the lower approachway.

Staff has reviewed NPS's NEPA documentation and finds that the factors that led to the Executive Director's FONSI in 2003 continue to be current. The location and nature of the visual impact, minimized to the extent possible by Section 106 consultation, were previously analyzed.

Staff has determined that the impacted historic and cultural resources, including viewsheds, are the same and that the FONSI anticipated the benefits of Section 106 consultation to minimize the effect as much as possible through design and placement of the barrier and the study of elements and materials to constitute the barrier. Study by consulting parties at the site of the impacts and possible design solutions was anticipated when the FONSI was executed. The barrier remains an impact, given the significance and symbolism of the memorial, its setting, and the views. However, as the currently proposed barrier is temporary, it will incur no permanent physical alteration of the site and is ultimately reversible.

NPS's longer-range comprehensive study of potential improvements to the approachway and Reflecting Pool will require a new NEPA analysis and will constitute a new undertaking and historic preservation review.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Architecture, landscape, topography, and location combine to create the Lincoln Memorial as the western terminus of the National Mall and the centerpiece of West Potomac Park. The memorial and its setting are of high historic significance and designed to be seen and experienced as a whole, creating a symbolic and commemorative landscape setting for the Lincoln Memorial within the spacious precinct of West Potomac Park and the Mall itself, and extending westward across the Memorial Bridge to Arlington National Cemetery.

The memorial itself, the circle, and the series of steps and turf and stone terraces leading to the memorial from the level of the Mall at the Reflecting Pool form a significant historic designed landscape. The site is heavily visited and over the years the Park Service has incorporated alterations for handicapped accessibility, visitor services, and construction for temporary events. The lawn inside the Circle has been altered by the construction of a retaining wall. The eastern side of the Circle, between Bacon and French Drives is now under construction as 250 bollards are being installed on the outer curb and the pavement in the Circle replaced for pedestrian use. The remaining area proposed for a temporary bollard line is the center line of the National Mall, the area defined by the approachway.

NPS executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on October 31, 2003 with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. All of the parties have been operating under the MOA in the ongoing consideration of a barrier line for the east side of the Lincoln Memorial.

The MOA stipulates that the bollard line "be placed at the outer edge of the plaza and circle on the east side of the Memorial." Although the current proposal for temporary measures proposes blocks rather than bollards, many different barrier elements have been studied over the intervening years, and the barrier line is very close to the location anticipated in the MOA.

The consultation has continued under the terms of the MOA through the current submission. Three consultation meetings were held this calendar year, the final one on April 25, 2008 being held at the site to review material samples, siting details, and a mock-up of the proposed form. The consultation has included, in addition to the agencies named above, the Commission, the

Commission of Fine Arts staff, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, and the National Coalition to Save Our Mall.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the current proposal for temporary barriers at its meeting on August 13, 2008. All agencies present coordinated the project.

The Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts anticipates reviewing the current proposal at its September 18, 2008 meeting.

