

National Park System – General Management Plans

General management plans are mandated by law. The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 states:

“General management plans for the preservation and use of each unit of the National Park System, including areas within the national capital area, shall be prepared and revised in a timely manner by the Director.”

General management plans (GMPs) must include “measures for the preservation of the area’s resources” and managing “visitor circulation and transportation patterns” as well as “identification of and implementation commitments for visitor carrying capacities for all areas of the System unit.” (54 U.S.C. § 100502)

According to the National Park Service’s Management Policies, the purpose of each GMP is to set a clearly defined direction for the park unit for resource preservation and visitor use, and guide future planning and projects. (§ 2.2 – Major Elements of Park Planning and Decision-Making). “The approved plan will create a realistic vision for the future, setting a direction for the park...” (§ 2.3.1 – General Management Planning).