



Foundation Document Overview

Anacostia Park and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens

District of Columbia



Contact Information

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Purpose



ANACOSTIA PARK, which includes the KENILWORTH PARK AND AQUATIC GARDENS, preserves forests and contributes to the protection of the water quality of the Anacostia River, protects historic, scenic, and natural resources and values, and provides high quality waterfront recreation opportunities for the local community and the visiting public.



Significance

Significance statements express why Anacostia Park and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Anacostia Park is one of the largest recreation areas in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, and is situated along the Anacostia River waterfront. The vision for the park's more than 1,100 acres is to restore and protect the quality and resiliency of the riverine ecosystem, while providing high quality naturalized spaces close to where people live that offer a wide range of recreational and educational programming.
- Anacostia Park embodies the network of parks and parkways envisioned for the federal city in the 1791 L'Enfant and 1902 McMillian Plans, which specifically recommended the extension of public park land along both sides of the Anacostia River. Situated within the heavily urbanized metropolitan area of Washington, DC, the park contributes to the quality of life for visitors and local residents by providing a variety of opportunities for recreation, reflection, and learning in an urban environment.
- Anacostia Park is an important ecological buffer between heavily developed urban spaces and the Anacostia River. It is actively managed to preserve and enhance forested areas and protect the water quality and resiliency of the Anacostia River ecosystem.
- Anacostia Park's naturalized shorelines provide habitat for a diverse population of plant and animal species not commonly found in an urban environment. The rare tidal wetlands of the Anacostia River reflect the natural and manmade processes that shaped the park and the river, and provide opportunities to learn about the natural and cultural history of the landscape.
- Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens constitute some 700 acres of Anacostia Park. The Aquatic Gardens are the only National Park Service unit devoted to the propagation and display of aquatic plants. The gardens provide a respite to visitors from locally heavily urbanized areas. Kenilworth Park also includes trails and recreational fields along the Anacostia River.
- Anacostia Park preserves and maintains the historic Langston Golf Course, opened in 1939 to provide golfing opportunities to African Americans during the segregation era. The semi-elite course illustrates the struggles of African American athletes to have access to recreational facilities of equal quality to white golf courses during the civil rights movement in Washington, DC. In 2013, the golf course was inducted into the National Black Golf Hall of Fame.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Natural Communities**
- **Recreational Opportunities**
- **Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens**
- **Anacostia River Corridor**

Anacostia Park and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens contain other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Archeological Resources**
- **Anacostia Seawall**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Anacostia Park was established as a corridor of forest and natural scenery as part of a comprehensive system of parks for recreation, preservation of substantial tracts of forests, and protection of source water in and around the nation's capital.
- Urban rivers are critical economic centers around which communities thrive due to the aesthetic, therapeutic, cultural, recreational, and education opportunities garnered through high quality interaction with the environment. Waterfront restoration can reduce flooding and erosion, make cities more resilient to storms, and improve air and water quality, while creating both tangible and intangible community benefits. Anacostia Park can provide enhanced access to natural resources in an urban setting and inspire community understanding of the natural world and the benefit of green corridors within Washington, DC.
- The National Park Service, in partnership with a large network of public, private, and nonprofit organizations, is committed to improving the health of the Anacostia River and its riparian corridor. The river and its ecosystems have changed significantly over the centuries; those changes are partly reflected in the engineered creation of Anacostia Park.
- Sites across Anacostia Park are critical to the stories of civil rights and social equity in the United States, such as the history of segregation and desegregation represented at Langston Golf Course, and the Bonus Expeditionary Force marchers who embraced the American right to free speech, attracting the attention of the nation and inspiring future generations to strive for economic justice.
- Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens protect a diversity of aquatic plants, serves as a serene environment for recreation, reflection, and environmental discovery, and communicates the commercial benefits of nurseries and water gardens.

Description

Anacostia Park came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service in 1933 and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens in 1938 under the authority of the Capper-Cramton Act (PL 71-284). This legislation mandates the National Park Service to preserve the flow of water and prevent pollution in Rock Creek and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, to preserve forests and the natural scenery in and about Washington, and to provide recreational opportunities in the nation's capital. In total, the National Park Service administers approximately 1,108 acres along both banks of the Anacostia River, and manages the bed of the Anacostia River.

Historically, the park has not been managed as a unified public asset, and as a result, areas of the park have been underused and under programmed. To address these issues and set the park on a course for citywide, regional, and national significance as a premier urban park, management and planning efforts are being directed toward restoring and protecting the quality and resiliency of the river ecosystem and providing high quality naturalized spaces close to where people live that offer a wide range of recreational and educational programming. These efforts will be most successful through sustained and thoughtful community engagement with adjacent neighborhoods and the larger Washington, DC, metropolitan area.

As a natural resource, the park serves as a buffer between heavily developed urban areas adjacent to the river. Through strategic planning efforts, urban waterfronts can serve as community gathering places for both humans and wildlife alike that encourage economic growth, promote ecological resiliency, and provide opportunities for personal tranquility. Waterfront restoration can reduce flooding and erosion and improve air and water quality, while creating both tangible and intangible community benefits. These resources also create vibrant green space within the city. The Anacostia River watershed drains approximately 176 square miles in Washington, DC, and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland, and is home to 43 species of fish and more than 200 species of birds.

The National Park Service is the lead agency under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) for three environmental cleanup sites along the shores of the Anacostia River, including Kenilworth Park Landfill Site, Washington Gas Light-East Station Site, and the Poplar Point Site. The National Park Service is also a co-lead with the District of Columbia Department of Energy and the Environment for environmental cleanup related to the sediment in the bed of the Anacostia River.

Anacostia Park comprises an area with hundreds of acres for multiuse passive and active recreation, including organized athletics, picnicking, biking, kayaking, walking, hiking, and recreational fishing. Recreational assets include portions of Anacostia Riverwalk Trail that connects local communities to both the park and a nearly 60-mile regional bicycle and pedestrian trail network in the District of Columbia and Maryland. The Anacostia Park Pavilion has approximately 3,300 square feet of space for roller skating and special events, and a public boat ramp that provide access to the tidal Anacostia River for recreational boating. Other sites within Anacostia Park also include Buzzard Point Park and James Creek Marina. Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens are the only gardens in the national park system dedicated to the propagation and display of aquatic plants. The aquatic gardens provide an oasis for visitors from the sights and sounds of the surrounding urban environment and support biodiversity and wetland functions. Anacostia Park provides a diversity of opportunities to recreate, learn, and engage with nature that reflect a multitude of urban interests.

The Anacostia River and its banks provide a unique setting to educate urban park visitors about environmental history, environmental conservation, stewardship, and the human past. For more than 10,000 years, humans hands have used and adapted the river, wetlands, tributaries, and landscape of the region. The most significant changes began in the early 20th century, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed the 16-mile Anacostia seawall. Anacostia Park is also home to a complex and interesting historical past linked directly to the nation's social and civil rights movements, including: the 1932 "Bonus Army" march encampment, the establishment of Langston Golf Course in 1939 as one of only 20 golf courses open to African Americans during segregation, and the site of several protests against segregation in the 1940s and 1950s, most notably the protest to desegregate the Anacostia Recreation Center swimming pool. The struggles for social equality, civil rights, and demonstration in the United States are reflected through the structures and landscapes of the park.

