



Highlights of [GAO-05-378](#), a report to congressional committees

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Managed Properties in the District of Columbia

Why GAO Did This Study

In recent years, several challenges have emerged concerning future recreational opportunities in the nation's capital. These challenges include ensuring that an adequate supply of parkland and open space is available to meet the needs of an increasing resident population and the estimated 20 million annual visitors to the District of Columbia's cultural institutions, historic sites, parks, and open spaces.

GAO identified (1) the universe of federal property in the District of Columbia (the District) managed by the National Park Service (NPS); (2) what recreational facilities, including those that are sports related, exist on these properties; (3) the condition of the properties with sports facilities and the sports facilities thereon; (4) new or expanded recreational uses discussed in NPS general management plans; and (5) the methods that could be used to convey management responsibility for NPS-managed properties to the District government.

Commenting on the draft report, Interior stated that NPS is addressing properties in the greatest need of repair or rehabilitation in priority order. It also said that it did not have authority to enter into a lease that allows the erection of a structure on its property. However, GAO believes that existing authority allows the NPS director to approve such leases under certain circumstances.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-378.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robin M. Nazzaro, (202) 512-3841, nazzaror@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

NPS manages 356 federal properties in the District, covering about 6,735 acres of land. Most of the properties are what NPS refers to as circles, squares, and triangles, and are less than 1 acre in size. The second largest total number of properties are parks and parkways, which represent about 93 percent of the total acreage for the 356 properties.

NPS officials reported to GAO that 202 properties it manages in the District had various recreational facilities such as park benches, outdoor grills, and picnic tables or shelters. Of the 202 properties, 25 had 205 sports facilities, such as basketball and tennis courts and baseball and softball fields.

Most of the properties with sports facilities were in good or fair condition, according to NPS deferred maintenance records, but information on the condition of individual sports facilities is limited. While we did not have criteria to determine the condition of sports facilities, we inspected each of the 205 sports facilities to identify obvious deficiencies, such as cracks in the surface area of tennis and basketball courts. Based on our observations, most of the facilities appeared to be well maintained, but we found some sports facilities had conditions that posed a potential safety risk.

NPS has developed four general management plans—two finalized and two in draft. These plans identify some opportunities for new or expanded recreation, such as rehabilitating selected baseball and softball fields and basketball and tennis courts; creating a regional sports complex; and developing new hiking trails. For example, one of the plans calls for the creation of a new trail that connects Forts Dupont, Totten, Stevens, Reno, and others as part of the Fort Circle Parks system.

Options available for transferring management responsibilities for NPS properties located in the District to the District city government include transfer of title, transfer of jurisdiction, memoranda of agreement or cooperative agreements, leases, and partnerships with public or private entities. Some of the options would require enacting new legislation while others may be exercised by NPS and the District under existing legislation.