

December 16, 2021: K. Sandt Memo Response to Bushkill Gateway Stakeholder Meeting #2

Good Afternoon, Anita,

Thank you for welcoming me to the stakeholders' meeting last week. There were several questions that came up that I want to address.

What is included in the Great American Outdoors Act road rehabilitation project taking place in 2022 between MP 0 and MP 7?

In this phase of the Route 209 project, the entire stretch of road between mile marker 0 in Middle Smithfield Township, Monroe County and mile marker 7 in Lehman Township, Pike County will be rehabilitated. Work will include milling the existing pavement, conducting full depth patch repair and spot base repair, culvert replacement, reconstruction of shoulders and line striping. The repair of the road surface, subsurface and drainage systems will extend the life of the road, eliminate the ongoing cost of frequent patching of potholes and other temporary corrective measures, and improve safety for motorists and bicyclists, including correcting the steep drop-offs on the road's shoulders.

We're looking forward to announcing the project publicly on December 20.

Regarding the TASA grant application and the requirement that construction begin

9/1/23: Even if the NPS concurred with the proposed actions, this is not a realistic timeline based on the amount of natural and cultural resource compliance that would need to be completed and on the level of stakeholder and agency consultation that would be required, including US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, both State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, and others including state and local permitting agencies. Other studies may also be required such as a highway crossing safety study. Those processes and studies would yield some of the data that would be needed by the NPS to make an informed decision. It is impossible to know at this time if the results of those processes would support the proposed actions or not. No decision could be made until the compliance and consultation processes have been completed.

With several major projects ongoing in the park in 2022 and planned in the next several years, our staff does not currently have the capacity to manage an additional project, particularly one of this magnitude, while also accomplishing our established priorities. As always, routine annual maintenance costs are a consideration as well.

What would be required to add a new spur trail to link with the McDade Trail?

It depends on several factors, starting with the proposed location. Other determining factors would include long-term routine maintenance costs for the new trail spur and any trail infrastructure and the staff time and costs that would be required to complete all necessary natural and cultural resource compliance processes, which could be extensive. It is also possible that those processes could indicate that there are no suitable locations in the area where the township proposes the spur be located. Trail construction would also require

extensive coordination between other landowners and would likely require the park to obtain state and local permits, both of which could be time-consuming endeavors.

Additionally, with 15 official access points to the McDade Trail, including 3 in the Bushkill area- Park HQ, Bushkill Village, and Bushkill Access- we would need to see data indicating whether there is a need for a new spur in that area and balance the level of that need, if there is one, with long-term routine maintenance costs and other priorities. It is important to remember the addition of any new facilities in the park, such as a trail spur, would necessitate the elimination, or cessation of maintenance and management, of another facility elsewhere. Data is critical in making those decisions.

Adding a new trail spur to the McDade Trail is not currently a priority for the park. The park's Visitor Use Management Plan outlines near-, mid-, and long-term actions for the McDade Trail on page 71. You can find the VUM Plan here: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Visitor Use Management Plan, November 2020 \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/dewat/visiting/visitor-use-management-plan.htm) The actions include:

Near-Term Actions (1-3 years):

- Address deferred maintenance through regular tread and bridge maintenance.

Mid- to Long-Term Actions (3-10 years):

- Resurface tread and improve drainage controls following universal accessibility guidelines for outdoor recreation.
- Assess the feasibility to add hiker/biker campsites along the trail.
- Complete trail construction in conjunction with improvements to US Route 209 to convert hiking only section to multi-use trail (This work would take place in the northern end of the park in a section where bicycles are currently not permitted on the trail.)

If I missed anything or misinterpreted any of the questions that I heard, please let me know.
Have a good evening,

Kathleen

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