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August 14, 2009

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Ms. Perry Wheelock, Chief
Division of Resource Management
National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Park Service
900 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024-2000

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Dear Ms. Wheelock:

This letter is to provide preliminary comments of The Committee of 100 on the Federal City on the proposed scope of work for the Environmental Assessment and Section 106 Process for the Rehabilitation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and Surrounding Area. The Committee is very glad to see this needed work, funded by stimulus funds, move forward. As background for these comments, I attended the Public Scoping Meeting at the Old Post Office on July 9, 2009. I have reviewed the materials posted on the National Park Service PEPC Site (presentation from the July 9 Public Scoping Meeting, the Concept Submittal to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts on July 16, 2009, and related materials). I have again walked the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool site and adjacent areas to observe existing conditions first hand and have consulted with other members of the Committee of 100. We understand that there will be future opportunities to comment as the Environmental Assessment and Section 106 Processes for this overall project move forward.

CHAIR EMERITUS

DON ALEXANDER HAWKINS

As you know, The Committee of 100 on the Federal City is currently involved in the review process for the National Mall Plan, including the Section 106 Consultation Process. We are interested in projects that deal in some way with the National Mall. Deteriorating conditions involving the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and the surrounding area are a serious matter. The Committee is very pleased that the National Park Service has obtained stimulus funds to address these problems and that the work is underway. Our comments are somewhat general at this initial stage of the proposal and follow the format of the "Scope of Proposed Actions" summary sheet that was provided at the July 9, 2009 Scoping Meeting.

Preliminary Comments on Major Proposals

Elm Walks

Upgrade Walkways and Site Furnishings: The Committee of 100 is supportive of the need to upgrade the “Elm Walks” walkways and site furnishings. We believe that appropriate lighting is necessary to provide security and to encourage more use of this section of the National Mall at night. Permanent lighting with a more appropriate design than the present ad hoc arrangement will be welcome. The Committee will comment in more detail when refined proposals for the walkways and site furnishings are presented. The National Park Service is also moving forward with a new signage and wayfinding system. It would be useful to know how new signs will be integrated along the Elm Walks and elsewhere in the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool Area.

It would also be useful to know how the National Park Service perceives the life expectancy of existing trees along the Elm Walks and how they will be replaced as they die.

Visual and Physical Links to D.C. War Memorial: The National Park Service has also received stimulus funds for restoration of the D.C. War Memorial, located south of the Reflecting Pool. We assume that the planning process for that project will be moving forward soon. In previous comments on the National Mall Plan (see May 15, 2009 letter to Susan Spain, Project Executive, National Mall Plan) the Committee of 100 suggested that the National Park Service undertake feasibility studies of opening a vista along the line of 19th Street, NW, south of Constitution Avenue, to the D.C. War Memorial, in order to better link this memorial to the city. We suggest that this present work on the Lincoln Reflecting Pool area consider both visual (vistas) and physical linkages (walkways) to the D.C. War Memorial

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool

Repair Reflecting Pool and Upgrade Infrastructure: The Committee of 100 is supportive of the general proposals to repair the Reflecting Pool, and to find new, more environmentally friendly sources of water. We will comment in more detail when more information is provided.

Upgrade Walkways: The Committee of 100 supports the proposal to provide new walkways along the Reflecting Pool to replace the “social paths” which have been formed along both sides of the Reflecting Pool. We do want to see more information on whether the proposed 12-foot wide walkways are the appropriate width, and what design features and other measures would be used to discourage a broader social pathway after the new walks are constructed.

Ice Skating on the Reflecting Pool: There was a question at the July 9 scoping meeting about future ice skating on the Reflecting Pool. The response was that the present Park Service policy is to allow ice skating, under appropriate conditions, on the lake in Constitution Gardens but not on the Reflecting Pool. There is some interest in the Committee to consider ice skating on the

Reflecting Pool (or a section of the Reflecting Pool). Therefore we request that the Park Service address the possibility of ice skating on the Reflecting Pool in terms of what would be needed to provide this opportunity, and the pros and cons of such a policy.

Lincoln Memorial East Plaza

There is clearly a need to provide permanent security barriers at the east plaza of the Lincoln Memorial, and to improve handicapped access down to the level of the Reflecting Pool. Three design concepts have been outlined, which seem to represent a good range of options. Concept 2, with low walls, appears to have some visual advantages. However, the Committee would like to see more information on these various alternatives.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City appreciates the opportunity to comment on the scoping proposals at this stage of work. Please contact us if you have any questions on these preliminary comments.

Sincerely,

John Fondersmith

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on the Federal City

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cc: Laura M. Richards, Esq., Chair
Committee of 100 on the Federal City