



Land Exchange Overview

A land exchange in the context of the Federal Lands to Parks Program involves the release of restrictive public park covenants on one piece of land (the exchange property) and the placement of those restrictive covenants on another piece of land provided by the grantee as future replacement parkland for the land being released. As a first step before fulfilling further requirements, the National Park Service (NPS) requires the grantee to state the purpose and justification for the proposed land exchange. This statement should include an assessment of public recreational utility for both the current park and the proposed replacement property, an explanation of why the original park property no longer serves the purpose for which it was conveyed, and how the replacement property will better satisfy the purpose and meet current park and recreation needs. This analysis should include an assessment of public needs and demographics. It should also reference relevant state, regional, city, or other local outdoor recreation plans.

Documentation Requirements

If the purpose and justification statement is approved, then the grantee would need to prepare and submit the following documentation:

1. A boundary survey(s) of the portion(s) of the park properties that are to be exchanged and the replacement parcel(s).
2. Appraisals. The fair market value must be obtained for all properties by appraisers certified at the MAI level. The appraisals must conform to the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions. The appraisals must be current and the same individual(s) should appraise both the subject property as well as the proposed replacement property during the same time frame. The portion of the parkland that will be converted to non-park use must be appraised at its highest and best usage, which is as though the park and recreation restriction had already been removed. The replacement property must also be appraised at its highest and best usage.
3. Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) of the proposed replacement parcel(s) (minimum of a Level I Survey) performed by an independent analyst with the appropriate credentials recognized by the NPS. The American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards should be used to determine if the land is environmentally safe and not latently contaminated.
4. Preparation of NEPA environmental assessment document(s) (as required by the National Environmental Policy Act) for the total land exchange describing the environmental effects of the proposed development. Documentation should include an analysis of potential impacts from displacement of recreational opportunities and impacts to the remaining parkland etc., and an assessment of potential impacts of new park development on the proposed replacement property.

Note that an assessment of potential impacts of future development and use of the property to be released from park and recreation requirements (i.e. conversion property) is not required.

Documentation from previously completed environmental assessments that address the potential impacts of the proposed land exchange may be submitted. Depending on the scope of the land exchange, the environmental review for both the subject property and the proposed replacement property may range from completing an Environmental Screening Form (ESF); to completing an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

5. An adopted resolution, ordinance or certification that states the public purpose of the proposed exchange. This should include an acknowledgement that all applicable restrictions contained in the original conveyance deed shall be applied to the proposed replacement parcel(s).

6. A disclosure statement that either: a) the original property and the proposed replacement are not encumbered with other recreation, conservation, grant or any other type of restrictions, or b) an explanation of any encumbrances/restriction(s) that exist on the original property and the proposed replacement property. This statement may be part of the cover letter, part of the resolution or a separate document, but it must be signed.

7. A location map, legal description, Program of Utilization (i.e. park and rec plan), title report, and development schedule for the replacement parcel(s). An analysis and justification must be provided regarding how the proposed new park/areas will meet an identified need for public park and recreation opportunities; as well as how the grantee will fully fund the recreational improvements on the replacement property. The replacement property may not already have been acquired or in use for recreational purposes. However, the replacement property may include other lands owned by the Grantee that are used or intended for non-recreation purposes.

Then NPS may approve a land exchange only with the concurrence of the General Services Administration and, in certain instances, with the appropriate agency/department within the Department of Defense for former military properties.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Any questions can be addressed to John Barrett, Program Manager, Federal Lands to Parks, National Park Service, 100 Alabama Street, S.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8701. 404-507-5689 | 404-562-3246 (fax) | john_barrett@nps.gov