

Hot Springs NP Considers Flood Control Alternatives

Hot Springs National Park and the adjacent city of Hot Springs, Arkansas, have been subjected to periodic devastating floods many times over the last century. In an effort to reduce the intensity and damage from floods, the City, the NPS, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have been involved in a series of studies to determine alternative solutions.

The Corps has identified a preferred alternative: a 26 foot diameter tunnel through West Mountain (inside the park) to route flood waters away from the most vulnerable area of the park (the historic Bathhouse Row) and the city. Regional and WASO Water Resources Division staff have worked closely with the Corps on this project for many months and have succeeded in getting the Corps to name a distinguished panel of independent hydrogeologists to develop the strategy for feasibility investigations.

While the NPS is satisfied that maximum precautions will be taken to protect the springs and other resources of the park, the Service is reluctant to pursue this course. The Corps has applied for a Special Use Permit to drill a series of test wells to study the tunnel route. Rather than deny the permit request outright, NPS Director Kennedy has promised the Corps some positive alternatives that would be acceptable to the Park Service.

The NPS has named its own panel of experts to develop those alternatives to the tunnel proposal and a report was expected by the end of September.