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June 13, 2006

The Honorable Fran P. Mainella  
Director, National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW Room 3112  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Mainella:

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to you for your willingness to meet and work with me and my staff concerning the proposed Georgetown Boathouse. I appreciate your concern, dedication and support for the C&O Canal. It has been a pleasure to work with you and your staff in search of a favorable solution about the Boathouse.

I remain very concerned about the proposal to build a private boathouse in the C&O Canal National Historic Park. The Environmental Assessment (EA) report represents the consensus of support for Alternative C. However, my office has been flooded with concerns and comments objecting to the findings of the EA report. There appears to be a growing amount of distrust and displeasure with the EA report from many of my constituents and many others who use and enjoy the C&O Canal.

Rather than resolving issues raised by the proposed boathouse, the EA report has generated greater concern about three major outstanding factors. The proposed boathouse would have significant effects on the unique characteristics of the C&O Canal. Construction of the boathouse would incur additional significant impacts on the C&O Canal. In addition, the proposed land exchange has become even more controversial. Satisfactory resolution of these three outstanding factors requires preparation of a complete Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed Georgetown Boathouse and all structures under consideration in the Georgetown waterfront area in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

I want to reiterate two concerns about the proposed land exchange. First, the EA report does not ensure that the land parcels to be exchanged would provide equal value to taxpayers. Furthermore, construction of a private boathouse, if it does not support the public access mission of the C&O Canal National Historic Park, would create an unwise precedent. I urge you to reconsider the proposed land exchange.

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Public support for construction of the boathouse is paramount for its success. I am convinced that if the EIS is not performed, public trust in the Park Service's management of the C&O Canal will be eroded. Without the additional information an EIS would provide, these outstanding issues greatly increase the risk of litigation that would delay or prevent construction of a new Georgetown Boathouse.

I look forward to receiving your response to my concerns and working with you to promote our mutual dedication to preserving and protecting the C&O Canal National Historic Park for future generations.

Sincerely,

Rescoe G. Bartlett  
Member of Congress

cc: Kevin Brandt

RGB:cj