

Comments to NPS from Defenders of Potomac River Parkland:

Defenders of Potomac River Parkland, a coalition of 24 conservation, recreation and historic preservation groups listed below, is very pleased to endorse the "Low Density" scenario described in the feasibility study because it is the only one that protects the wooded C&O Canal National Historical Park while providing new boating facilities outside the park on degraded land in need of redevelopment. See following additional comments:

1. No new private development should be permitted within the C&O Canal NHPark. Any new facilities within the park should serve the public and be operated by NPS, either directly or through a concessionaire.
2. Team rowing facilities should be outside of the C&O Canal NHP. Any new facilities for multi-person racing shells should be outside the park.
3. The "Low Density" scenario is the only one of three described in the study that protects the natural, historic and cultural resources of the C&O Canal NHPark while providing new boating facilities at good locations outside the park.

The "Low Density" scenario: retains and enhances existing facilities within the C&O Canal National Historical Park; includes provisions outside the park for high school and collegiate rowing programs as well as for recreational paddlers and single rowing sculls; acknowledges the sensitive natural, historic and cultural resources within the park; addresses the safety issues along the narrow, congested trailhead of the Capital Crescent Trail/DC Water sewer access area within the park; and protects the "viewshed" within the park/Potomac Gorge, including the scenic views from the Key Bridge, the GW Memorial Parkway, the Canal towpath, the Potomac Heritage Trail, and the American Discovery Trail.

Reasons why the Defenders group does not support the "Medium" and "High Density" scenarios:

The "Medium" and "High Density" scenarios include major new construction inside the C&O Canal NHP. Such structures would: adversely impact adjacent natural, historic and cultural resources within the park; pose new safety and access issues along the narrow, congested trailhead of the Capital Crescent Trail in the park; possibly conflict with an important DC Water sewer project at the gateway to the park; and modify the "viewshed" of the scenic area.

We look forward to working with the National Park Service in the next phase of a "Low Density" project.

Sincerely,

Sally Strain, Coordinator Defenders of Potomac River Parkland, www.savethecanal.org

Member organizations are: American Canoe Association; American Hiking Society; American Whitewater Association; Appalachian Mountain Club; Audubon Naturalist Society; Canoe Cruisers Association; Clean Water Action; C&O Canal Association; Center for Biological Diversity; Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail; East Coast Greenway Alliance; Friends of the Earth; Global Green; National Parks Conservation Association; Potomac Appalachian Trail Club; Potomac Conservancy; Potomac Heritage Trail Association; Potomac Pedalers Touring Club; Quantico Orienteering Club; Rails to Trails Conservancy; Sierra Club-DC Chapter; Washington Area Roadskaters; Washington Canoe Club; Western Lands Project.