

Date: November 01, 2005

Subject: Mega Boathouse on the Potomac

Dear Fran,

I am an avid recreational kayaker, and my favorite watering hole is Jack' Boats on the Potomac, just a few hundred feet from a parcel of waterfront that the National Park Service plans to donate to Georgetown University. Georgetown intends to build a boathouse on this parcel for its exclusive use. This deal is contrary to the public interest. Why should NPS give away pristine public land for private benefit? The stretch of waterfront that Georgetown University will acquire accommodates thousands of recreational boaters, bikers and hikers every week during the summer months and thousands more the rest of the year.

According to a report by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (which works hand in glove with NPS to maintain trails in Shenandoah National Park and also along the Potomac River) "the structure would be enormous -- seven times the size of the nearby, historic Washington Canoe Club. The new building would destroy trees and habitat; threaten the riverbank, C&O Canal, and historic structures with erosion and flood damage; and potentially harm water quality. The 70-foot docks would alter the river flow, deny access to recreational boaters, and interfere with the Olympic kayak and canoe teams that train in this section of the Potomac."

Georgetown University's plans for the Georgetown waterfront are an affront to the citizens of that community, and NPS' accession to Georgetown's plans make a mockery of its mission to steward our nation's parks. Of course NPS realizes that if it goes forward with this deal, it's going to be challenged in court by a long list of public interest and athletic organizations. Does it really think it can win? Or does it cynically plan to squander NPS' limited budget in a protracted legal battle?

Audrey Clement, Ph.D.  
Arlington, Va.