

(Text of letter from NPS Regional Director Joseph M. Lawler to Robert B. Norris, 2/26/07, re. Norris's contention that the GTWaterfront Park is not in compliance with NEPA.)

Dear Mr. Norris:

This is in response to your letter of November 27, 2006, and your letter we received by fax on December 8, 2006, in which you challenge the National Park Service's (NPS) compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act for the development of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. We also discussed your point of view at a meeting with you on December 20, 2006.

In July 2006, you verbally requested a copy of our 1984 Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Georgetown Waterfront Park. On July 14, 2006, we provided you with over 300 pages on this matter, including the EA. The EA was not "secretly prepared for internal use", "with no public notice or review" and "only made public on July 14, 2006", as you have suggested. As noted in the June 27, 1984 EA, Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the NPS consulted and coordinated with over 16 organizations representing thousands of constituents during a 2-year public planning effort. The issue of establishing and developing a park on the Georgetown Waterfront has probably been the most publicly discussed issue of any park in this region.

We cannot concur with your proposal to revisit this longstanding plan and its public design review process. The sole reason you offer for this exercise is to have the proposed Georgetown University Boathouse moved to a location east of 34th St., which would be inconsistent with past planning for the area. The 1987 development plan recognized shell racing as an important historic sport in Georgetown, which was expanding in popularity. It made a commitment to supporting rowing by setting aside a non-motorized boathouse zone in the Georgetown Waterfront and C&O Canal parks for the development of new non-motorized boathouses. The purpose of this zone was to place the boathouse architecture where it had been historically, to cluster it around the commanding presence of Key Bridge, and to develop a boathouse row as a signature architectural composition of the waterfront. Careful deliberations led to the zone's boundaries. The downstream end stopped at 34th St. for two reasons. First, the Whitehurst Freeway and the buildings on its north side shadows K St., and a dark and gloomy appearance would result if boathouses were permitted east of 34th St. Second, the creation of a shoreline park and strolling garden, embellished with a minimum of other architectural elements, was and continues to be the goal for the area.

We do not believe that a flawed land use decision has been made, with respect to Georgetown Waterfront Park. We are still evaluating options for the Georgetown University Boathouse proposal in the context of the existing boathouse zone, and are seriously considering your comments on this matter.

With regard to the schedule of the ongoing construction of the Georgetown Waterfront Park, we anticipate completion in spring 2008. Completion of this park which has received all of its approvals, including the National Capital Planning Commission, Commission of Fine Arts and the NPS House and Senate Appropriations Committees does not foreclose potential future projects, such as the removal of the Whitehurst Freeway or a boathouse in the location that you have proposed. Rather, such projects would simply have to take into consideration that this area is parkland, whatever its condition, and mitigate impacts accordingly. Thank you for your interest in the parks of the Georgetown Waterfront. Sincerely, Joseph M. Lawler

