

June 23, 2005

Fran Mainella
Director, National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 24240

Dear Director Mainella:

It is self-evident that the National Park Service as a matter of overriding principle ought not engage in the business of turning over prime parcels of national park land for private use. To do so casts aside a preeminent public interest in favor of lesser private interests. By statute our national parks are set aside for the use and enjoyment of all our citizens and not just for a few.

However, the Park Service appears to be on the verge of violating its ruling principle in the plan to turn over to Georgetown University a prime parcel of the C&O Canal National Historical Park just below the university. The huge boathouse the GU wants to put there will, if built, command the historic view of the Potomac at Key Bridge blocking the view shed from the canal towpath and the Crescent Trail. The contemplated swap of a useless slice of former railroad right-of-way up river for this prime public property is merely a thin disguise for a high-handed land grab in our national historical park. Such an action is not simply local in effect, but sets a bad precedent for national parks in general.

Such a deplorable derogation of the National Park Service's statutory requirement to protect national park holdings ought not even be contemplated. No necessity demands that there be a private boathouse in the Park. Neither should any outside influence induce the Park Service leadership to falter in its protection of the public domain under its care. I hope that you will act in time to avoid a grievous error in fundamental policy.

Sincerely yours,

Carl A. Linden
6406 Ridge Drive
Bethesda, MD 20816

cc: Gale Norton