

January 10, 2006

Hon. Fran P. Mainella
Director, National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Mainella:

Re: Georgetown University Boathouse

I now have it from a reliable source that the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Georgetown University boathouse proposal has been scrapped and a new EA is being prepared from scratch. For the reasons advanced elsewhere, it has become abundantly clear that the proposed site for this boathouse within the C&O Canal National Historical Park near the entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail is a mistake. Thus, this turn of events presents the Park Service with an opportunity to correct prior land use planning mistakes.

Because of their importance to the public, may I respectfully reiterate a couple of recommendations I made in my letter to you of December 8, 2005.

1. You should direct those officials in the Park Service responsible for the EA to shift their focus for Georgetown University's boathouse to the alternative site immediately downstream from 34th and Water Sts. adjacent to the site designated for George Washington University's boathouse. This site is clearly an environmentally preferred alternative for it raises few, if any, NEPA issues. It is deeper and more readily accessible than the originally proposed site. The selection of this site would also end the pending litigation in the U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia which could go on for years.

2. You should also direct the same Park Service officials to terminate the policy precluding George Washington University from proceeding toward the realization of its own boathouse until Georgetown University's boathouse situation is resolved. In these circumstances, the site for George Washington's boathouse should be included in the renewed EA. These officials should also take the appropriate steps to finalize the land exchange between the Park Service and GW without further delay.

I also recommend and urge that you provide a mechanism for public participation in the development of the EA. The last time the public was even peripherally involved in the "draft" EA

was a year ago. Much has happened since then. The public has in many ways a larger stake in this matter than either the Park Service or Georgetown University. The determination of this matter, and in particular the selection of Georgetown University's boathouse site, should not be based on private discussions between the Park Service and Georgetown University, and the public then presented with a fait accompli. In fact, because of the active and close participation of Georgetown University, a private entity, with the Park Service in the development of the EA, a document theoretically prepared, controlled and promulgated by the Park Service, there can be no doubt that the public should be involved.

The adoption of these recommendations would result in a quickly approved Environmental Assessment. In fact, I can see both universities breaking ground for their boathouses in the very near future. Of course, the sooner both universities are able to move into their own boathouses, the better for the high school rowing programs, as much needed space will then become available at the Thompson Boat Center.

I believe you will agree that if the Park Service follows these recommendations, the public's interest in preservation and protection of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and the Capital Crescent Trail would be secured. Moreover, the Park Service would obtain Georgetown University's upstream parcel and the easement thereto for incorporation into the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Because of the involvement of both Georgetown University and GW in the matters discussed above, I am sending a copy of this letter to the appropriate officials of those institutions.

Respectfully,

Robert B. Norris

cc. Dr. John J. DeGioia
Lewis Rumford, III