

**DEFENDERS OF POTOMAC RIVER PARKLAND**  
**JUNE 22, 2005**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CITIZEN GROUPS PROTEST PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT IN C&O NATIONAL PARK TO DC COUNCIL**

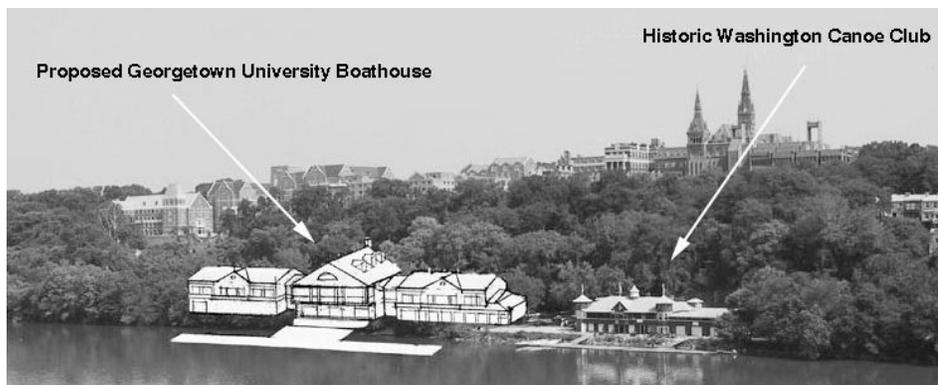
Washington, DC, June 22 – Fourteen citizen organizations are petitioning the DC Council at 1 pm today, at the Council chambers at 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, to examine a National Park Service plan for a private boathouse in C&O Canal National Historical Park.

The Park Service proposes to transfer a prime parcel of wooded public parkland to Georgetown University for an exclusive boathouse and exercise facility, despite months of public protest that the plan is not in the public interest.

The Sierra Club of DC, League of Women Voters of DC, Audubon Naturalist Society, and C&O Canal Association are among the civic, environmental, and recreational groups voicing concern about the impacts on park users, the general public, and the environment. The organizations have formed a coalition called Defenders of Potomac River Parkland.

"The giving away of historic national parkland for construction of an imposing private structure sets an alarming precedent that deserves public scrutiny," said Fred Mopsik, environmental chairman of the C&O Canal Association. Mopsik pointed out that the current design entails a building with a 19,000-square-foot footprint--several times larger than the historic buildings in the area--and nearly double the height of the C&O Canal towpath.

Besides setting a precedent for future land use decisions in national parks, construction of the enormous facility would destroy trees and wildlife habitat; threaten the stability of the riverbank, C&O Canal, and historic structures; interfere with use of the popular Capital Crescent hiking/biking trail; and radically alter the view from both shores.



The land is located upstream of the Key Bridge and is sandwiched between the Potomac River and the Capital Crescent Trail, just a few yards from the C&O Canal embankment. In return for

obtaining ownership of the site, Georgetown University would transfer an unbuildable plot of land farther upstream to the National Park Service.

The citizen groups and local residents are airing their opposition at a roundtable on local river quality and on the boathouse proposal, at the DC Council Chamber, 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, hosted by the DC Committee on Public Works and the Environment chaired by Carol Schwartz. The roundtable begins at 10:00 am, and the boathouse issue is scheduled to be discussed at 1:00 pm.

Concerned citizens who are unable to attend are encouraged to submit written comments to the DC Council by July 6, c/o Phyllis Jones, Secretary to the Council, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 5, Washington, D.C. 20004.

Citizens are also asked to send emails to National Park Service Director Fran Mainella, [fran\\_mainella@nps.gov](mailto:fran_mainella@nps.gov), demanding that the Park Service:

- Preserve national parkland for public use, not develop it for private facilities.
- Build private boathouses outside of the C&O Canal National Historical Park.
- Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement on the boathouse proposal.

For more information on the proposed development, see [www.savethecanal.org](http://www.savethecanal.org) or contact the Defenders of Potomac River Parkland, c/o Sally Strain at [seawalk@starpower.net](mailto:seawalk@starpower.net).

Defenders of Potomac River Parkland includes American Canoe Association, American Whitewater Association, Audubon Naturalist Society, C&O Canal Association, Canoe Cruisers Association, Citizens Committee to Save Laurel Lakes, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, Friends of the Earth, League of Women Voters of DC, National Parks Conservation Association, Potomac Conservancy, Potomac Pedalers Touring Club, Sierra Club of DC, Washington Canoe Club, and local residents.

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