

June 23, 2005

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

Dear Fran Mainella:

As you know, National Parks are created in order to set aside certain areas in recognition of a need superior to all other usages. They are meant to reserve these areas for the benefit of all the people. The Congress recognized this need when it authorized the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Georgetown University is now employing dubious schemes to build a monstrous private boathouse near Key Bridge within the Park.

This proposal involves a land swap which is phony on its face. The land which would be received by the park service in exchange has been evaluated as unbuildable and is clearly of little or no use to the Park. How can this 45-foot-wide strip of former CSX railroad property in any sense be of "equal value" to prime park land? Can there be any doubt that GU covets this parcel of our national historical park just below the university with its historic view of the river at Key Bridge?

The authority of the Park to dispose of land only by exchange was intended to permit disposition of land not essential to the Park for that which is needed to insure its integrity. Certainly it was not intended to permit private development within the Park.

Through the years, the authority of the Park to acquire land by purchase or exchange has been used to enhance the integrity of the Park by elimination of all "in holdings" for private use. The proposed exchange would fly in the face of this policy. This proposal also raises the question of precedent. Would any or all National Parks be up for sale in this manner?

The participation of Park Service personnel in this process to convert public land to private use is clearly contrary to the mission of the Park Service to preserve and defend our National Parks. Besides questions of ethics, a number of legal issues are involved.

It is incumbent upon you on behalf of the National Park Service to take a position in opposition to this proposal.

Sincerely yours,

Ken Rollins

cc: Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, Senator Paul Sarbanes, Congressmen Roscoe Bartlett and Chris Van Hollen, and the National Parks Conservation Association.