

January 11, 2012

Mr. Peter May, Associate Regional Director  
National Capital Region  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: NPS Feasibility Study to Implement a Non-Motorized Boathouse Zone along the Georgetown Waterfront

Dear Mr. May:

The purpose of this letter is to express our appreciation to the National Park Service for the decision to do a feasibility study for a boathouse zone along the Georgetown waterfront, and to share with you the basic position of the Defenders of Potomac River Parkland:

- A. No private development should be permitted in the C&O Canal National Historical Park.
- B. The wooded area upriver from the Washington Canoe Club should be preserved.
- C. The NPS feasibility study should be comprehensive; therefore, the project zone should be extended downriver to include the Georgetown Waterfront Park and Thompson's Boathouse.

For almost nine years, the Defenders, a coalition of more than twenty organizations, has opposed the proposal to build a massive private Georgetown University boathouse in the C&O Canal National Historical Park. During those years, we have offered many reasons why the plan is not in the public interest, such as: the site is a scenic wooded section between the busy Capital Crescent Trail and the Potomac River; it is situated next to the fragile and historic Canal towpath; it is a tidal floodplain that contains wetlands; it lies within the Potomac Gorge, one of the most biologically rich areas on the East Coast; and the parkland is part of a national, regional and local treasure used by thousands of daily walkers, bikers, birders, history enthusiasts, and visitors to our Nation's capital. These technical, environmental, economic, safety and practical considerations remain relevant today.

Alternative locations outside of the C&O Canal NHP for new boating facilities would provide advantages for everyone, while protecting the park from inappropriate development. In addition, a more accessible location downstream from the C&O gateway corridor would provide an opportunity for new facilities to be shared with other boating communities, including high school boating programs, instead of being used by only one group of athletes from one private university, as proposed by NPS in the past. We have made these points: in our letter of October 16, 2009, to NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis; in EIS Scoping Comments of January 13, 2008; in earlier EA comments; and in many public meetings. These constructive alternatives remain available.

We look forward to working with you and other NPS officials to find a way to both protect the C&O Canal NHP from unnecessary private development and provide appropriate new boating opportunities outside the national historical park.

Sincerely,  
Sally Strain, Coordinator

Defenders of Potomac River Parkland

[www.savethecanal.org](http://www.savethecanal.org)

Member organizations are: American Canoe Association ; American Hiking Society; American Whitewater Association; Appalachian Mountain Club; Audubon Naturalist Society; Canoe Cruisers Association; Clean Water Action; C&O Canal Association; Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail; Dupont Circle Conservancy; East Coast Greenway Alliance; Friends of the Earth; Global Green; League of Women Voters of DC; National Parks Conservation Association; Potomac Appalachian Trail Club; Potomac Conservancy; Potomac Heritage Trail Association; Potomac Pedalers Touring Club; Quantico Orienteering Club; Rails to Trails Conservancy; Sierra Club-DC Chapter; Washington Area Roadskaters; Washington Canoe Club; Western Lands Project.

cc. Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton; Councilmember Mary Cheh; DCWater Georget S. Hawkins; DCDOE Director Christophe Tulou; DCSHPO Officer David Maloney; C&O Canal NHPark Superintendent Kevin Brandt