

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
8TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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June 23, 2006

Mr. Kevin Brandt
Superintendent
C&O Canal National Historical Park
1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100
Hagerstown, MD 21740-6620

Re: Georgetown University Boathouse

Dear Superintendent Brandt:

I am writing to urge the National Park Service to conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") for the proposed Georgetown University boathouse. In my view, the Environmental Assessment ("EA") that was recently completed does not provide an adequate assessment of the public benefit of the land swap and the potential impact of this large structure on the Potomac River and the areas downstream.

Before stating my reasons for this request, I would like to make it clear that I am not opposed to the construction of a boathouse by Georgetown University on the Potomac River. Indeed, I believe that it is important to have additional recreational facilities available to all residents of our region, and that a new boathouse for University users will enable increased recreational opportunities by freeing up capacity in the existing boathouses. I also commend Georgetown on the efforts it has made to alter its initial designs to accommodate the environmental and aesthetic considerations that were raised earlier in this process.

The question, however, is whether the proposed site and design satisfy the environmental and other requirements that must be met for such a project. In order to answer that question, I believe that a full EIS is warranted for the following reasons:

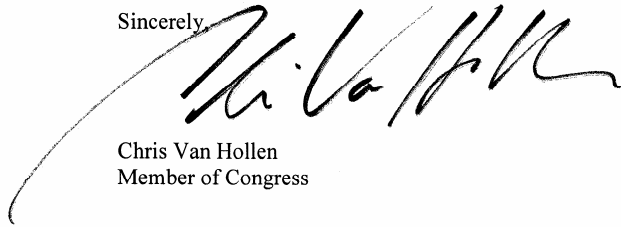
1. Water quality impacts and the increased potential for flooding that may result from such a dramatic change in land use on the site should be considered thoroughly in a full EIS. The EA did not study these impacts.
2. The National Park Service has not provided any evidence that the proposed land-swap is a fair and equal trade. The EA did not consider fair market value in looking at the land-swap and, instead, focused on a

consideration of parcel size. A full appraisal should be conducted to ascertain the fair market value of these properties.

3. The proposal does not sufficiently address the impact to the historic resources contained within and around the C&O Canal and the Capital Crescent Trail.

A thorough and comprehensive analysis of the effect of the proposed boathouse on the natural resources involved is lacking from the Environmental Assessment and can only be accomplished by conducting a comprehensive EIS. The National Park Service is a steward of our public parklands and should conduct a thorough review before making a final decision on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress