

The Committee of 100
on the Federal City



March 30, 2012

Ms. Tammy Stidham
Project Manager
National Park Service
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20242

RE: Feasibility Study to Implement a Non-Motorized Boathouse Zone
along the Georgetown Waterfront”

Dear Ms. Stidham:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City (C100) is pleased to submit comments in addition to those provided both verbally and in writing at the National Park Service (NPS) Focus Group meeting on February 6, 2012. At that time a copy of an earlier letter and comments submitted on behalf of C100 by Barbara Zartman were submitted for the record. The January 18, 2008 letter noted “the site is subject not only to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) but the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) as well.” C100’s comments remain current as further planning is undertaken to implement a non-motorized boathouse zone along the Georgetown Waterfront. C100 requests consulting party status in any future NEPA and/or NHPA compliance process.

The groundwork that will be laid through the Feasibility Study regarding scenarios for development of NPS facilities or potential land exchanges for private development of boathouses within the C&O Canal National Historical Park will enable future decision making that must balance the needs of all who use the park. The current tug between competing interests is reminiscent of a time in the 1950’s

when Associate Justice William O. Douglas, challenged those who felt paving over the C&O Canal to create a highway would enable more people “to enjoy beauties now seen by only a few.” Today, the C&O Canal NHP welcomes more visitors each year than Yellowstone National Park. Justice Douglas, who lived in the Palisades neighborhood, with easy access to the Canal, recognized the importance of preserving the C&O Canal for all who wish to enjoy its scenic beauty and history.

Operating for nearly 100 years the canal was a lifeline for communities along the Potomac River as coal, lumber and agricultural products floated down the waterway to market. Today it endures as a pathway for discovering historical, natural and recreational treasures.

(NPS description of the C&O Canal.)

Partially located in the District of Columbia, the C&O Canal serves as a link between the past and the present. The lifeline that once ensured goods being transported to communities along its 184 mile length, serves as the buffer between the communities of Palisades, Foxhall Village and Georgetown and the Potomac River today. Its towpath, initially the walkway for barge-pulling mules, has been adapted as a pathway for walkers, joggers, bikers, as well as those who use it to commute to work each day. It is as much a transportation route today as when the towpath was first constructed.

The Committee of 100 was established in an age that sought to revive and extend the planning ideals for Washington, DC. Today, C100 extends those ideals to the planning for the future use of the Potomac River waterfront and recognizes the study area includes the C&O Canal NHP and the entrance to the Potomac Gorge. Multiple users seek access to the river for activities such as hiking, biking, boating, birding, etc. The interests of all users must be balanced to ensure public parkland is preserved in perpetuity for all. To that end, C100 submits the following additional recommendations for the establishment of a non-motorized boathouse zone:

- Extend the study area to include the Georgetown Waterfront Park and Thompson’s Boat Center;
- Establish hours to enable motorized boats to access Washington Harbor;

- Eliminate from consideration C&O NHP areas necessary to DC Water's Clean River Initiative for the Combined Sewer Overflow Project;
- Prohibit the segmentation of the C&O NHP by private interests;
- Share all facilities and access to the river with the public; and
- Investigate the purchase of the large concrete building at the base of Key Bridge and 34th Street for a multipurpose storage and rowing facility.

The C100 looks forward to working with NPS in the future.

Sincerely,



George R. Clark
Chair