

GREAT FALLS

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD #1 REPORT

October 17, 2023

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

Project Description

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a Development Concept Plan (Plan) for the Great Falls area of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in Montgomery County, Maryland. The project area extends north to south approximately from Swains Lock (Lock 21) to the Anglers parking area, respectively. The Plan will explore management strategies that create a healthy balance for visitors to enjoy the beauty of the Park and for the natural environment to thrive.

Following public comment period #1, the NPS will use public feedback to develop preliminary management strategies for the project area. The public will have the opportunity to review and provide comments on the management strategies during a second public comment period, which will include a public meeting. Public feedback will then be used to refine the management strategies and develop the draft concept plan. The outcome of this effort will be a Development Concept Plan.

Comment Period #1

The first public comment period for the Plan began on August 28, 2023, and extended through September 29, 2023. Project materials posted on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website included a general announcement about the public comment period, which asked for the public's feedback on the following questions:

- What activities and experiences do you seek in the Great Falls area?
- What facilities and/or services would make you feel welcome or satisfied with your experience?
- What issues most interfere with your desired experience?
- Do you have other thoughts you would like to share with the project team?

A newsletter about the project and background information was also posted on the PEPC website. The newsletter included the following:

- Message from the Superintendent
- Why the Plan is needed

- Key planning issues and opportunities:
 - Visitor experience
 - Resource management
 - Safety
 - Parking and traffic
 - Use of historic structures
 - Accessibility
- Where NPS is at in the planning process
- Details on how to comment

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Twenty-six pieces of correspondence were received during the public scoping period. Correspondences were received from residents of:

- Maryland (17 correspondences), including residents of Annapolis, Bethesda, Dickerson, Frederick, Gaithersburg, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, Potomac, Rockville, Silver Spring, and Williamsport
- Virginia (6 correspondences), including residents of Alexandria, Arlington, McLean, Sterling, and Vienna
- Washington, DC (1 correspondence)
- Tennessee (1 correspondence)
- Utah (1 correspondence)

Official representatives from the following groups/organizations submitted comments:

- C&O Canal Association
- C&O Canal Trust
- Canoe Cruisers Association
- Fina Trails LLC
- Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern
- Old Angler's Inn

Members and volunteers from the following groups or organizations submitted comments. These commenters noted that their correspondence was submitted in their own individual capacity and not on behalf of the group/organization.

- C&O Canal Trust
- National Parks Conservation Association – Mid-Atlantic Council
- Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC)

- Senior Trail Seward, Billy Goat A
- Palisades Division of the C&O Canal NHP Bike Patrol
- Preventive Search and Rescue (PSAR) Team

The following summary of comments is provided to outline the major groupings of comments, along with examples of specific comments to illustrate the trend.

1. New Activities, Facilities, and Services

Fourteen (14) correspondences recommended new activities, facilities and/or services. These correspondences included those from official representatives from the C&O Canal Association, C&O Canal Trust, and the Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern.

Some recommendations were location-specific, whereas other recommendations did not include a location. General recommendations included:

- “Bring back the bike rentals”
- Host “a military themed event like a ruck march”
- Improve cell phone connectivity and wifi access “to better support NPS and Trust work, as well as to give visitors easy access to online resources via their cell phones”
- Re-water the canal
- Provide a “gondola education tour along the canal”
- Add “dedicated spaces that introduce visitors to the currently under told stories of indigenous peoples, Black Americans, and canal boat and lockhouse families”
- “Work with local schools to have educational programs in the park”
- Add organized hikers with a naturalist to learn about the park’s ecological features
- “Publicize how the park is working to mitigate climate change”
- “Educate the visiting public on the reality of climate change and ways we can all help to alleviate it. Programs such as Canal Classrooms and Canal For All can incorporate these same lessons into the classroom and on the ground learning.”
- Improve interpretive and wayfinding signage
 - Add “mileage and directional signage at Anglers, Great Falls, and Swains towpath access points to make visitors more aware of the extent of the park, proximity of Great Falls Tavern as well as mileage and directional signs to nearby park features and trails.”
 - “Improve signage and awareness of trails other than the Billy Goat Trails to encourage more balanced trail usage.”
 - Provide “improved interpretive waysides at access points with easy connectivity to comprehensive online resources”
 - “Expand and improve interpretive and way-finding waysides along the trails to educate visitors on the area’s unique history, natural resources, and environmental threats”

Near the **Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center and Great Falls**, correspondences recommended to:

- Provide “working Canal boats pulled by mules and working locks to reinforce the authentic experience”
- Add a native pollinator plant garden, which could “help educate the public on the importance of planting native plants. There could be a display of the different host plants and their pollinators. Life cycle information could also be shown.”
- Add a campground for hikers and cyclists
- Upgrade/diversify food options
 - “Upgrade the food option at the Great Falls Visitor Center to more than food trucks, which can be hit or miss in terms of having actual lunch/dinner options for visitors, especially through bike riders. Sometimes the food trucks on site only serve snacks or dessert type items. Since there are no food options along the towpath between Fletcher’s Cove and White’s Ferry this has been a problem for many bikers in my experience”
 - “Food trucks are one possibility, but they need to be scheduled, rotated to get more than tacos, and advertised on web sites and apps.”
- Provide canoe rentals

At **Billy Goat Trail Section A**, correspondences recommended to:

- Add hydration stations at upstream and downstream trailheads
- Add alternative routes that avoid the cliff traverse
 - “It’s very tricky even if hiked many times and not an appropriate feature for high traffic trail – I would imagine this is a major bottleneck and hazard area for people and complicates emergency responses.”
- Add more signage about the trail being one-way, including “more prominent “wrong way” signage at the Anglers end of the trail to deter folks going the wrong way (especially groups)”

Near the **Anglers parking area**, correspondences recommended to:

- Provide directional signage with distances to the Billy Goat Trail Section A, B, and C trailheads; the Great Falls Overlook trailhead; and the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center
- Add modern water bottle filling stations

2. Visitor Access – Parking

Nine (9) correspondences noted existing challenges and/or provided recommendations related to parking and vehicle access. These correspondences included those from official representatives from the C&O Canal Association, C&O Canal Trust, Canoe Cruisers Association, Fina Trails LLC, and Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern.

Existing Challenges

At the **Great Falls entrance**, a correspondence noted that “traffic can be backed up the entrance road for some distance.”

At the **Anglers parking area**, correspondences noted that visitors have “ask[ed] about alternate parking, not understanding that Anglers is not the main parking area” and that “the parking area at the Great Falls Tavern is extensive and well maintained, but many visitors prefer the Old Angler’s Inn entry point.”

Recommendations

One correspondence noted generally, “easy access with regulated and safe parking, even if that means raising the annual pass fee.”

For **all parking locations within the project area**, correspondences recommended to:

- Install EV charging stations
- Upgrade and reimagine the parking areas to allow for growth in traffic

At the **Swains Lock parking area**, correspondences recommended to:

- Expand the parking area
- Maintain free parking

At the **Great Falls entrance and parking area**, correspondences recommended to:

- “Improve NPS app / pass process to allow NPS passes to be put into phone wallet and scan from that, save time at entrance fiddling around with physical card.”
- Widen the road approach to the fee booth with an increased number of lanes to expedite entry
- Have a dedicated “fast lane” for those with annual or senior park passes
- Add “an additional entrance lane and automating payment or utilize prepaid parking passes, similar to the Park It Forward program at Great Smoky Mountains, to reduce entrance delays, recognizing that having some limitation on total visitation on the busiest days of the year may be appropriate to limit overcrowding in the park”
- “Post electronic signs at MacArthur Boulevard and Falls Road, directing visitors to other access points up River Road beyond Swain’s.”
- “Encourage out of town visitors, including all buses, to go to the Great Falls parking lot. . allowing the NPS to collect fees from such visitors”

At the **Anglers parking area**, correspondences recommended to:

- Add fees for parking

- Maintain free parking
- Expand the parking area
- “Improve signage at Anglers to direct more people to the main Great Falls parking area especially on weekends, provide maps/info boards at the parking area rather than on the towpath.”
- Add signage “to direct users to Carderock might relieve some pressure at Old Angler's.”

Along **MacArthur Boulevard**, correspondences recommended to:

- Revisit the County Authority’s decision to close MacArthur Boulevard off for street parking
- Prohibit parking along MacArthur Boulevard, except in parking spaces

Additional recommendations that are not specific to one parking area, but may relieve vehicle congestion, included:

- Use shuttle buses between MacArthur, Swains, and Great Falls
- Use shuttle buses from other parking areas “like Carderock where there is greater parking capacity” or “from a remote parking lot on weekends, such as Potomac Elementary School, not otherwise used on weekends.”

3. Visitor Access – Trail

Five (5) correspondences noted existing challenges and/or provided recommendations related to trail access. These correspondences included those from official representatives from the Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern.

Existing Challenges

In general, a correspondence noted that there are too many people on the trails, including “too many people that don’t stay on the path or litter.”

On **Billy Goat Trail Section A**, a correspondence noted that there are “jam-ups at the Traverse.”

At the **Great Falls parking area**, a correspondence noted that there is a “lack on connections between the visitor parking lot and the C&O Canal. While the parking lot has only one entrance and exit for cars that does not need to be the case for visitors to the canal. The person who parks at the far extreme of the parking lot needs to walk all the way down to Great Falls Tavern in order to gain access to the C&O Canal. This creates an unnecessary bottle neck including bikes, kayak and walkers.”

Recommendations

To address the challenge of too many people on the trails, a correspondence recommended less parking noting, “most of the people that go to the park have to drive there so less parking would mean less people. This might make it less welcoming but I feel conservation should be top priority. I know the park has limited funding and less parking would be less expensive than enforcing limitations on the amount of people that hike the trail.”

To address the challenge of congestion on the **Billy Goat Trail Section A** traverse section, a correspondence recommended to “permanently require visitors on the Billy Goat Trail travel in one direction.”

To address the challenge of lack of connections between the **Great Falls parking area** and towpath, multiple correspondences recommended adding a bridge over the canal at the north end of the parking area. These correspondences included considerations for such a bridge, including cost, limited traffic that could use the bridge, and the bridge being high enough to accommodate the Mercer when the canal is fully watered and strong enough to withstanding flooding.

4. Visitor Access – River and Canal

Five (5) correspondences noted existing challenges and/or provided recommendations related to accessing the Potomac River and/or Canal specifically for paddling. These correspondences included those from official representatives from the Canoe Cruisers Association and Fina Trails LLC.

Existing Challenges

Correspondences noted the following paddling access challenges:

- “The Sandy Beach Steps are in disrepair”
- “The Chutes area just upriver from the Angler’s parking lot and Mather Gorge. Parking at Angler’s is a huge headache, though. The parking lots are frequently full and parking in the Great Falls lot isn’t feasible if you’re going to paddle The Chutes as you’d have to walk the 2 miles to the put-in each way carrying a 30-60 pound kayak. Even pulling a heavy kayak on a cart that far is hard on your body.”
- “Mather Gorge below Great Falls is a wildly popular area for paddling. The access route from Great Falls Tavern to the river at the base of the falls is an arduous trail to carry a boat”
- “When boaters use the Lower Canal they park their vehicles, unload their craft, cross the canal, enter the Potomac, paddle down one of its swift-water sections, and return up the Canal. When the Canal is dry, they must return to their put-in spot by carrying their boat or by running the shuttle by car, which is far less attractive.”

Recommendations

Correspondences recommended to:

- Provide “good access for kayakers”
- Provide preferential parking at the Anglers parking area for “people who really need the Angler’s lot” to address paddler access challenges at the Angler’s parking area. The commenter noted “I’d be happy to buy some kind of annual parking pass for that lot, for example.”
- Always contain water in the canal to accommodate the Mercer and other canal boats pulled by mules
- Improve the access route from Great Falls Tavern to the River at the base of the falls
- Add a “river access point for canoe take out above the water intake” at the Great Falls Tavern, which would be “sufficiently far upstream that the boater does not have to worry about being sucked into the Fish Ladder Chute” The commenter noted ““The paddle trip from Violette’s Lock to Great Falls Tavern area is also popular, and has the advantage that you can shuttle by bicycle back up the tow path to Violette’s lock.”

The correspondence from the Canoe Cruisers Association included several detailed recommendations, including:

- “Restoring the paddle-back requires water in Level 14 from Anglers up into Widewater and in Level 16 with a short portage trail around Lock 15. In detail: Raise Widewater by six inches so boaters may descend the wooden steps on the berm at the Anglers bridge and paddle up the Canal into Widewater and up to the end on the towpath side. Improve the rudimentary trail curving up under the wooden pedestrian ramp, coming out on the towpath just above Lock 15. This would allow boaters to portage without crossing with other visitors on the ramp. Boaters then carry along the towpath to Lock 16, launch into the 0.3-mile Level 16, and paddle up through the Stop Lock to Lock 17. A single lock gate at Lock 16 or a two-foot wall there would enable navigation. Boaters would exit just before Lock 17, cross the towpath, and descend the Sandy Beach Steps, launch into the River and return through Mather Gorge down to Anglers Beach. This return portion of the Canal was in use by boaters, as it was fully watered as recently as 2006, partially so in 2018.”
- Level 21 Swains
 - Improve take-out and put-in at the Lockhouse
 - Improve put-in into the River
- Great Falls/ Fishladder Loop
 - Improve put-in and take-out on either side of Canal with stone steps
 - Repair Sandy Beach Steps
- Mather Gorge Loop (Level 14, Widewater, and Level 16)
 - Raise Widewater to enable paddling down to Anglers bridge
 - Clean out Level 14 (Anglers to Widewater)
 - Build take-out at upper end of Widewater with connecting trail under towpath ramp and up to Level 15
 - Rewater Level 16 by installing a single Lock 16 gate (or two-foot stack of sandbags)
 - Build simple flagstone steps for put-in at Lock 16 and take-out at Lock 17 to get to Sandy Beach Steps
 - Repair Sandy Beach Steps down to Catfish Cove
- Level 14 / Anglers
 - Improve entry to Middle Parking Lot, even out its surface
 - Reopen access into the Canal via the now overgrown steps at Anglers parking area bridge

5. Visitor Access – Accessibility

Five (5) correspondences expressed support for accessibility improvements. Accessibility recommendations included:

- General
 - Provisions for visitors who are physically challenged (e.g., “Benches along pathways, walks, and around open gathering or waiting areas. . . . Handrails along stairs and sloped walkways”)
 - ADA-compliant improvements to publicly accessible buildings and structures
- Location Specific (presented north to south)
 - “Swains is ADA compliant but could use a retrofit.”
 - Accessibility improvements to the canal boat program
 - Improvements to the approach to the Great Falls Overlook “so that visitors with mobility issues can reach the point more easily”
 - “At Anglers, upgrade the path/step system to better accommodate handicapped visitors by making the emergency entrance/exit road smoother and easier to navigate.”

6. Visitor Access – Other

One correspondence provided the following additional visitor access recommendations:

- “Expand the Capital Bikeshare program to the Great Falls area”
- “Consider steps to enhance equitable public access to Great Falls, such as working to ensure there is public transportation via bus from 1-2 metro stations on weekends during the summer”

7. Visitor Safety – General

Three (3) correspondences, including those from the C&O Canal Association and Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern, provided the following general safety recommendations:

- Have a volunteer and/or Ranger at the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center “especially when there are weather hazards forecasted for the day”
- Create “an opt-in SMS system or app to alert visitors of car break-ins, assaults, and other criminal activity along the length of the park”
- Increase law enforcement “given the high visitation of this area and the potential for accidents along the Potomac Gorge”
- Bolster law enforcement, safety, and medical teams “as increased visitation takes place, with the potential for more accidents, vandalism and assaults”
- Provide “enhanced training for volunteers such as trail maintenance and tree clearance, canal level walkers and biker patrols, canal stewards and quarter masters can assist NPS professional staff as canal ambassadors to inform and educate the public on safety and appropriate behavior in national parks.”

8. Visitor Safety – Trail

Seven (7) correspondences noted existing challenges and/or provided recommendations related to trail safety. These correspondences included those from official representatives from the C&O Canal Association, C&O Canal Trust, and the Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern.

Existing Challenges

Correspondences noted the following concerns regarding trail safety:

- Congestion at Great Falls, particularly on the weekends
- Lack of place to secure bicycles with camping gear in order to visit Great Falls, as bicycles are not allowed on the walkway
- “Washouts on the towpath, especially around the downstream trailhead Billy Goat Trails Section A that extend up to Lock 15. As a PSAR Team member I drive the park’s UTV on the TP and the washouts are a hazard.”

Recommendations

Correspondences recommended the following to address trail safety concerns:

- Widen “the walkway [to the Great Falls overlook] to allow bicycles OR have bike lockers available similar to the lockers near the trail in Cumberland Maryland” to accommodate cyclists with camping gear who would like to see Great Falls
- Improve education about the risks of trails. The correspondence noted that although some trails can be dangerous, especially the Billy Goat Trail, the experience is incomparable
- Require cyclists to dismount on the tow path between Lock 20 and Lock 17
- Create an educational program that informs cyclists about park regulations/rules when interacting with other park visitors on the towpath (i.e., speed limit requirements, passing procedures, user priority)
- Add speed limit and safety protocol signage for bicyclists on the towpath, especially for those using electric bicycles

One correspondence provided several recommendations specifically to address safety concerns for the Billy Goat Trail Section A:

- Staff the trail on busy weekends
- Use volunteers to warn hikers about the trail and current conditions
- Install signage/map at trailheads to “cover trail difficulty, suggested hiking equipment/supplies (water)”
- Install “on-the-trail. . . descriptive and locational signage at key trail points,” which would be “very useful for emergency rescues. If an injured individual can say they are “just downstream of “Pothole Alley”, for example, they can pinpoint their rescue location.

9. Visitor Safety – Water

One correspondence noted “ I’ve seen a lot of folks out around The Chutes without proper safety gear. I’d advise adding signs and better enforcement for PFDs and helmets.”

10. Buildings and Structures

Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center

Eight (8) correspondences, including those from official representatives from the C&O Canal Association, C&O Canal Trust, and Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern, provided recommendations for the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center. These recommendations can be categorized into dining and/or lodging use, visitor center elements, and offices.

Dining and/or Lodging Use

Five (5) correspondences recommended providing food services and/or lodging at the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center. Commenters noted:

- “I urge this group to consider restoring the tavern to its historic purpose of a public house with various hospitality services, including dining, and perhaps a lodging component catering to canal users, be it hikers or cyclists. . . . This would improve the visitor experience and restore a historic use along the canal.”
- “Consider expanding the park's historic leasing program to provide food service at the Great Falls Tavern, so that it can serve as a tavern, rather than maintaining the small food concession inconsistently near the parking lot”
- “Great Falls Tavern historically provided by food, drink and lodging to travelers. The incorporation of all three of these elements are critical to creating an authentic experience at Great Falls.”
- “The visitor's experience to the Great Falls would, could be and should be significantly enhanced by repeating the history of the tavern, I.e., breathing life back into the tavern by repurposing (the National Park Service term, reinvigorating would be a better description) the tavern as an operating tavern.”
- “The concept of a Tea Room could also be entertained. Space is limited but were the NPS to retrofit other campus buildings to accommodate staff offices and a Ranger Station, the second and third floors of The Tavern could be suitable for consideration as a Canal Quarters destination.”

Some of these commenters noted that if the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center were to be repurposed to provide food services and/or lodging, then improvements such as modernizing bathrooms, upgrading electrical, HVAC, and plumbing infrastructure, and expanding parking, (since an operating tavern would be likely to draw more visitors) would be needed.

Visitor Center Elements

Seven (7) correspondences provided recommendations for the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center's exhibits, where the Visitor Center is located, and other visitor center offerings. Recommendations included:

- Update exhibits
- Include more information on people who frequented the area before English speakers
- Add a gift shop

- Convert or replace the concession stand at the end of the Great Falls parking lot to a visitor center, gift shop, and cafe
- Provide “a state-of-the-art Visitor Center, with state-of-the-art digital and interactive resources, as well as more traditional exhibits, to introduce visitors to the whole park - its history and prehistory, its unique geology and important natural resources, and its recreational opportunities. The Tavern is totally inadequate for this use due to its size and because the use would compromise the historic integrity of the building. Another less historic structure or new construction should be utilized to house this experience.”
- “All campus buildings with The Tavern, as the center piece, could become a state-of-the-art living historic museum and Visitors Center that enlighten and educate all visitors. Current exhibits and signage provide very little of the extensive history of the canal, the Great Falls Tavern, and the Great Falls area. The Museum/Visitors Center could serve multiple functions as Canal Classrooms, Canal For All, Nature Center and Community Center.”

Offices

Four (4) correspondences recommended relocating staff offices currently housed in the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center. Recommendations included:

- Construct new office space
- Renovate existing structures “on the hill” to provide office space
- Renovate or replace the concession building to provide office space
- Add dedicated office space “to enable the [C&O Canal] Trust to support fulltime staff member at Great Falls”

Other

One (1) correspondence recommended removing “tavern” in regard to the Visitor Center to avoid confusion among “through bikers who assume the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center is actually a working tavern that provides food and refreshments.”

Restrooms

Four (4) correspondences provided restroom recommendations. Recommendations included:

- Overhaul/enhance the restrooms
- Maintain clean and well-maintained restrooms
- Use the contractor that services the DCWater restrooms at Fletcher’s Cover and the Anglers parking area because those restrooms are cleaner and better maintained
- Install portable or permanent restrooms at the far end of the Great Falls parking area

Lockhouses

One (1) correspondence recommended restoring lockhouses “to functional use as either lodging, or repurposed for retail use. A lockhouse store that sold light refreshments and trail necessities (sandwiches and band aids, etc) would be welcome to canal users of all types. There are far too few commercial resources along the canal, requiring canal users of any distance to be self-supported in greater measure than a resource like this should require.”

General

Additional recommendations related to historic buildings and structures included the following:

- Utilize historic buildings “for their original purpose to preserve an authentic experience” and “to tell the story of C&O Canal NHP in a holistic way”
- Harden all other historic structures, such as locks, “to withstand weather related impacts and heavy visitation”

11. Resource Management and Maintenance

Thirteen (13) correspondences expressed concerns and/or recommendations for resource management and maintenance. These correspondences included those from official representatives from the C&O Canal Association, C&O Canal Trust, Final Trails LLC, and the Friends of Historic Great Falls Tavern.

Existing Concerns

Correspondence noted the following resource management and maintenance concerns:

- Trail users not staying on path
- “Degradation of the Billy Goat A trail system and the whole Bear Island ecosystem caused by heavy human foot traffic.” Visitors are “unfamiliar with the meaning of trail blazes/markings, or miss them completely” and/or “naturally follow the well-trod social trails”
- The trails in the Goldmine loop area are degraded (i.e., erosion, muddiness, and trail widening maintenance issues)
- Debris in Widewater is visible when the water is low
- Trees growing on “log wall” at Widewater (mile 13-13.45)
- Flooding
- Litter
- Grounds by the Great Falls Tavern are “weedy with bare areas due to foot-traffic and poor maintenance”

Recommendations

Recommendations related to resource management and maintenance included the following:

- Trails
 - Repair and maintain the Towpath and Berma Road
 - Improve trail signage to “encourage those using the trail to stay on the path”
 - Re-blaze the Bill Goat Trail Section with additional blazes and provide good instructional signage at trailheads regarding use of the blue blaze system
 - Place physical barriers or other impediments at social trail entrances along the Bill Goat Trail Section A

- Replace the Goldmine loop area trails with a sustainable trail system to “reduce erosion and sedimentation into the river, improve the user experience and safety”
 - Re-evaluate the numerous wooden foot bridges in the Goldmine loop area
 - Assess the Ford mine and River Trails as “redesign of the park trail system to remove the trails from floodplain areas that are prone to flood damage and trail muddiness”
- Canal
 - Pull debris from Widewater
 - Restore the locks
 - Keep logwalls free from trees
- Buildings and Structures
 - Place new buildings on higher ground to address flooding and climate change concerns
 - Harden all existing and renovated buildings and structures so that they are sustained over time with climate change
- Drainage and Flooding
 - Improve drainage in picnic areas
 - Install better flood management systems
- Natural Resources
 - “Build on and expand conservation initiatives such as the work to preserve and protect rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals.”
 - Protect natural habitats
 - Remove invasive species
- Other
 - Require food vendors to “be responsible for collecting and removing trash around those areas”
 - Use clean renewable energy sources (instead of fossil fuels)
 - Create “a walkway from the road behind the Tavern towards the main entrance to the visitor center. Currently it is bare ground with soil and natural debris flowing towards the walkway during heavy rain storms. The NPS might consider placing beautification wooden fences immediately around The Tavern and the patio like the original fencing years ago. Planned native flower plantings should go inside the perimeter of the fencing and along the patio walls of the Tavern.”

12. Ideas Not Supported

Two (2) correspondences expressed opposition to the elimination of the mule program for the canal boat tours and/or replacement of the mule program with modern technologies.

One (1) correspondence expressed opposition to “obtrusive barriers or dumbing down the strenuousness of the trails” to address hiking safety issues.

One (1) correspondence expressed opposition to expanding parking at the Anglers parking area.

13. Recommendations Outside of the Project Scope or Project Area

Billy Goat Trail Section B

Four (4) correspondences recommended re-opening Billy Goat Trail Section B. Commenters noted that re-opening Section B would alleviate congestion on Section A, serve as a less strenuous alternative to Section A, reduce the number of trail rescues, and deter unwanted behavior along the currently closed Section B.

One (1) correspondence recommended performing a professional trails assessment and developing a maintenance plan for Section B.

Other

Correspondences also recommended the following ideas, which are either outside of this project’s scope or the project area. The following ideas are presented north to south.

- Resurface MacArthur Boulevard from the Great Falls entrance station to the Anglers parking area. Potholes, which are difficult to see in the shade, and overgrown or obstructed road edges are hazardous to cyclists
- Remove fallen trees out of Canal prism between the Anglers parking area and Brickyard Road (MP 11.3)
- Remove invasive climbing vines killing trees along the Clara Barton Parkway
- Maintain free parking in good condition along the Clara Barton Parkway
- Perform a professional trails assessment and develop a maintenance plan for Billy Goat Trail Section C
- Maintain free parking in good condition at the Carderock parking area
- Create a trail from the Clara Barton National Historic Site and Glen Echo Park parking area to the Lock 7 footbridge to create an additional access point to the Towpath and relieve vehicle congestion
- Maintain mule program canal boat tours in Georgetown