

Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County

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Paul Orlando
Regional Coordinator
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410 Severn Ave, Suite 207-A
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March 30, 2017

Re: Endorsement of the Mallovs-Potomac Sanctuary, and advantages of Alternative D

Dear Mr. Orlando:

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County (SGACC) is a broad alliance of over twenty local, state, and regional organizations representing both community and environmental interests. We are dedicated to the conservation of special places for future generations to enjoy, and to economic models that respect these places.

The SGACC strongly supports the designation of a Mallovs-Potomac National Marine Sanctuary. We welcome NOAA's acknowledgment of the keen public interest in a more comprehensive sanctuary by including Alternatives C and D in the draft Environmental Impact Statement. Of these options, we note that the latter offers a richer maritime heritage and broader opportunities for tourism, recreation, education, and research.

The tidal Potomac is a trove of maritime cultural heritage that extends in time from precolonial nations to when the river acted as avenue to the nation's capital. Alternative D best represents this "big story." Archeological evidence of indigenous cultures is concentrated along its larger estuaries, which retain the tidal marshes—especially well represented in Mattawoman Creek—that provided sustenance to these peoples. Interpretation of colonial and post-colonial eras is enhanced by the seaport of Port Tobacco, and by Chapman State Park, site of a colonial ferry crossing and location of perhaps the best documented fishing shore on the river. Later, the Potomac as route to Washington saw intense action in the Civil War that is strongly represented in Alternative D, including the battlescapes of Mathias Point to the south and around Cockpit Point opposite the Mattawoman to the north.

Alternative D burnishes the sanctuary's national significance through the "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" of Nanjemoy and Mattawoman Creeks and the Port Tobacco River listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. These estuarine habitats enrich educational and tourism opportunities with additional subject matter and access points to quiet and safe waters especially suitable for school programs. These habitats are also vital for wildlife and birds. The Nanjemoy and Mattawoman Creeks have been designated Important Bird Areas, as has Chapman State Park.

*1000 Friends of Maryland • AMP Creeks Council • Audubon MD-DC • Chapman Forest Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Foundation • Clean Water Action • Coalition for Smarter Growth • Conservancy for Charles County
Maryland Bass Nation • Maryland Conservation Council • Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Native Plant Society • Maryland Ornithological Society • Mattawoman Watershed Society
Nanjemoy-Potomac Environmental Coalition • Nanjemoy Vision, Inc. • Potomac River Association
Potomac Riverkeeper Network • Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter • Sierra Club, Southern Maryland Group
South Hampton HOA • Southern Maryland Audubon Society • St. Mary's River Watershed Association*

Mallows-Potomac encourages an economy based on heritage and nature tourism in line with the region's character. To maintain this character, a broader geographical extent with no shortage of maritime attractions could relieve the possibility of marring the sensitive Nanjemoy area with overuse, as crowding is already occurring at Mallows Bay itself. Alternative D includes the town of Indian Head, a suitable location for tourism infrastructure, including a visitor center. Using the model and analogy of Thunder Bay emphasized by NOAA at the public meetings, we note that Indian Head has been experiencing economic distress for some years now. Including it within the sanctuary boundaries could go far toward its revitalization as a tourism destination that would be compatible with the naval facility there.

Sincerely,

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