FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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EXCHANGE OF PROPERTIES
CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ACTION: Exchange of Tract 102-114 (National Park Service) for Tract 102-109 (Georgetown University), in the District of Columbia and within the boundary of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal NHP).

DESCRIPTION: The proposed action, which was analyzed in an environmental assessment (EA) dated July 14, 1995 and noticed in 60 F.R. 37,472 (July 20, 1995), consists of the proposal between the National Park Service (NPS) and Georgetown University to exchange two tracts of land within the legislated boundary of the park. The exchange would be accomplished under authorities available to the NPS at 16 U.S.C. § 460l-22(b) (1988), and 16 U.S.C. § 410y-1(b) (1988).

Tract 102-109 is located one mile north of the Washington Aqueduct Bridge. It is owned by Georgetown University and is accessible via a reservation of access that coincides with the NPS Capital Crescent Trail, a paved pedestrian-bicycle trail which was opened to use in 1993. Tract 102-114 is approximately 470 feet north of the Old Georgetown Aqueduct Bridge, adjacent to the site of the Washington Canoe Club facility. It was identified as a potential boathouse site in a 1989 NPS Special Study of Nonmotorized Boating.

The proposed exchange of these two tracts will allow the NPS to accomplish several goals. These are: the acquisition by the NPS of a wooded, prime wetland site along the shore of the Potomac River, thereby precluding from development, a largely undisturbed inholding of natural and scenic character; the acquisition and extinguishment of nearly a mile of private access rights along a public trail; and the implementation of the long-term goal of the NPS to enhance the opportunities for non-motorized boating on the Potomac River. Prior NPS studies of non-motorized boating options for the Washington, D.C. area were used in the development of this EA and are appendices to the EA.

In exchange for relinquishing this tract of relatively undisturbed land and most of its right of access along the Capital Crescent Trail, Georgetown University gains a location to place a collegiate boathouse in an already developed portion of the waterfront of the Georgetown section of the C & O Canal NHP. This area was designated for boathouse use in the fully approved

MAY-19-2003 12:16 EL PM DEPARTMENT 2026875679 P.02/14
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 180
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.180

Georgetown Waterfront Plan of 1987. This proposal does not contemplate a marina (motorized boating) use of this parcel. Georgetown University intends to construct a boathouse for its students, in an open landscaped setting which will be available to the public. The length of common access along the Capital Crescent Trail from K Street N.W. to the site of the proposed Georgetown boathouse will be managed to ensure safe access by the public and Georgetown University. Completion of the rowing structure and its occupancy by Georgetown University will result in space becoming available for use by the public at existing boating facilities presently used by Georgetown University.

ALTERNATIVES: The no-action alternative, Alternative A, would likely be a proposal by Georgetown University for development of Tract 102-109 as a boathouse or other collegiate recreational facility, which would have an adverse impact on the native flora and fauna on its tract as well as on the resources of the surrounding parkland. Additionally, Georgetown University would also retain its right to use vehicles on an approximate one mile length of the Capital Crescent Trail to reach its inholding, thereby disrupting visitor use and enjoyment of the Trail.

A second option, Alternative B, is for the National Park Service to forego an exchange and seek an appropriation of public funds to develop Tract 102-114 as a recreational boathouse or seek a concessioner to develop a boathouse facility on parkland in order to meet the identified need to augment the public demand for additional non-motorized boating access to the Potomac River. However, in this alternative, Georgetown University could develop its own facility on Tract 102-109 as well, and continue to use the right of access along one mile of the Capital Crescent Trail.

ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: No significant environmental or socioeconomic issues were identified during the preparation or public review of the EA. There were two requests for copies of the EA and one request for an extension of time to comment, which was withdrawn. Further, copies of the EA were mailed to the Commissioners of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Commission and the Washington Canoe Club, which has a permitted area and privately owned facility adjacent to Tract 102-114. No substantive comments were received.

The National Park Service has consulted with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on this proposal which was found to be dependent upon water access and a location on the shoreline. With respect to Executive Order 11988, the project, while it is located within the floodplain, cannot be accomplished without use of the floodplain. Under the NPS Regulations published in the Federal Register on May, 28, 1980, this action falls within the category

of excepted actions, as defined under Section 5(B)(3); therefore, further compliance with Executive Order 11988 is not required.

With respect to Executive Order 11990, the project is within an area designated as wetlands. However, the purpose of the proposal cannot be accomplished without the use of the wetlands. Under the NPS Regulations published in the Federal Register on May, 28, 1980, this action falls within the category of excepted actions, as defined under Section 5(B)(3); therefore, further compliance with Executive Order 11988 is not required.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers evaluated both parcels for wetlands characteristics. The wetlands that are on the National Park Service tract are not of the kind that are considered to be beneficial to the preservation or improvement of water quality of the Potomac River or the Chesapeake Bay. The Georgetown University tract, however, was considered to contain high quality wetlands which are contributory to the preservation and improvement of water quality of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

No archaeological artifacts were determined to be on Tract 102-114 due to prior major construction disturbance. No rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species or their habitat are located within either parcel.

The District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer previously concurred in the Georgetown Waterfront Park plan, which will be partially implemented through this exchange. The National Register of Historic Places has been consulted, and it has been determined that the C & O Canal NHP and the Washington Canoe Club structure properties are listed on the Register. These will be affected by the future erection of a boathouse on this tract by Georgetown University. Therefore, compliance with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is required. In that regard, the design of the boathouse itself will be subject to the review of appropriate agencies, including the Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Capital Planning Commission, and the State Historic Preservation Officer. In accordance with these requirements, copies of all pertinent correspondence are enclosed.

DETERMINATION: A review of the environmental assessment and other information obtained in connection with the proposed agreement to exchange property between the NPS and Georgetown University indicates that approval of the proposal does not appear to constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, as described in

affecting the quality of the human environment, as described in Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The actions to be taken in connection with this project are consistent with the objectives and policies of that Act, and the National Park Service processes for evaluating archeological, wetland and other aspects of this proposal have been followed. This exchange will be conducted pursuant to the recently revised National Park Service land exchange guidelines (February 16, 1995). Pursuant to that Act, the guidelines of the Council on Environmental Quality and National Park Service Guidelines (NPS 12, September 1982), the criteria have been met, and, therefore, the assessment document is considered to be adequate.

Based upon the cited documentation and the rationale of the decision above, I find that this project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the human environment, nor is it environmentally highly controversial. The public was notified that the environmental assessment was available for review and no substantive written comments were received. The project is not committing the NPS to specific future actions which would constitute a significant or controversial impact. The impact of this proposal is not of a cumulative nature, either in itself or in conjunction with other Federal or non-Federal projects. Therefore, pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the aforementioned Act, the Guidelines of the Council on Environmental Quality and National Park Service Guidelines (NPS 12, September 1982), this proposal does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Recommended: _____ 9/6/95
Douglas D. Faris, Superintendent
Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park
National Park Service

Approved: _____ 9/6/95
Robert Stanton, Field Director
National Capital Area
National Park Service

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SENDER	SENDER'S TELEPHONE NUMBER	SENDER'S ROOM NUMBER
Nate Gross	202-942-5956	1230A

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180

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