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Canoe Cruisers Association of Washington DC has been actively and effectively involved in river access. We were the plaintiff in the lawsuit that opened the Potomac River to paddling when President Trump golfs at his riverside golf course. CCA persuaded the C&O Canal National Park to restore water to the canal so we could loop our trips after accessing the rapids in the George Washington canal. We partnered with Seneca Creek State Park and actively cleared fallen trees in Seneca Creek so that paddlers can enjoy the river. Also, CCA participated in the development of the Harpers Ferry River Access Plan.

Two of the most popular and active stretches of whitewater in the Nation are the Shenandoah Staircase and the Needles Stretch of the Potomac River. Both of these runs juncture at Harpers Ferry where the rivers combine and create the main Potomac. Both of these popular and heavily used stretches of exciting whitewater have had terrible put-in and takeout issues. Despite the fact that we paddle both rivers through national parks, the put-ins FOR BOTH RIVERS are on private land. We are not even allowed access to put in on riverside portions of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. We currently have to pay fees to private owners when we should have free public access. Both runs have the same severely limited take-outs. Paddlers have to either use Wayside situated off Route 340, a major highway, and share a tiny pull-out area (with only three parking spaces!) with all the commercial rafters and tuber's bus shuttles or we paddle an extra mile and a half down to Weverton and carry our boats nearly half a mile to Keep Tryst Road across double CSX railroad tracks with no safety standards. A third option again is to pay fees to a private landowner.

Three years ago the Canoe Cruisers joined with American Whitewater to receive a Rivers, Trail, and Conservation Assistance (RCTA) grant through the National Park Service to study these issues. The result was the Harpers Ferry River Access Plan sponsored by American Whitewater.

Why is Weverton so important to the whitewater community? First it is downstream of the whitewater sections of both the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. In an area of 3 states, 4 National Parks and multiple counties and districts, legal river access is rare. Weverton is a mile and a half downstream of the whitewater and is about a half a mile walk from the Potomac River. The trail is merely an unimproved social trail. After carrying a boat all that distance, paddlers still need to traverse two CSX tracks that offer NO safety warnings. The tracks are on a long curve and CSX deems safety whistles and speed limits unnecessary even through 27,000 people a year cross the tracks here.

HOWEVER, when improvements are made, Weverton will rapidly become a primary takeout not only of paddlers but of commercial rafters. and tubers as well. Our suggestions are as follows:

- 1) Make the ramp on the bridge gradual, taking into account how arduous it is to carry heavy boats.
- 2) Improve the trail with flood-proof steps and modern surfacing. One goal would be to make it handicap accessible.
- 3) Increase the parking to realistically address the popularity of whitewater sport. 4) Make sure Weverton is on the official maps and guidebooks of the area, so paddlers are informed and up-to-date about their choices.

The Canoe Cruisers Association is so grateful that this feasibility study has been made. CSX and the recreational needs of four National Parks can and must be safely blended!

Historically, Weverton is fascinating. Mr. Wever created a major industrial hub that included multiple companies, a river wide dam and extensive buildings. As an historical site the history of CSX could easily be lauded with displays and photographs. The footbridge could be an artistic, educational showplace to make the National Parks and the State of Maryland proud.

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