



TONY BARTELME/STAFF

Developers of Poplar Grove recently closed a gate on a road to Charleston County's public Bulow boat landing, triggering concerns among local boaters.

WATCHDOG

Not so fast! Boat landing closure developer's mistake

BY TONY BARTELME
The Post and Courier

Ralph Earhart is a longtime kayak guide in Charleston who sometimes starts trips at Charleston County's Bulow Landing on Rantowles Creek.

So he was shocked when he heard that developers of Poplar Grove closed a gate on the road to this picturesque public boat ramp.

"I'm concerned because we're spending a lot of tax dollars maintaining these boat landings, and I would hate for the public to lose access to one," he said.

He called the county Park and Recreation Commission, and a staffer told him the issue "needed to be dealt with by some higher-ups." Earhart contacted Watchdog.

The public will continue to have access to this landing, said PRC Executive Director Tom O'Rourke.

"The owner thought that the road and landing was on his property," he said. The county researched the issue and determined that the road is owned by the state and can't be blocked. The county also owns a lease to the landing, which is good for another 80 years. "I don't think for one second it will be closed off," O'Rourke said.

The Bulow Landing is on a quiet curve in Rantowles Creek that's particularly popular with kayakers in the winter, said Earhart, author of "Kayak Charleston" and trip planning chairman of Lowcountry Paddlers.

"It's a nice place to get in and do a short trip and be sheltered from the wind," he said.

The road leading to the boat landing also is the site of one of Poplar Grove's new residential developments. Jane Martin, associate developer of Poplar Grove, said the public will continue to have access to the landing.



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"It's going to stay just as it is," she said, adding that the developers recently hired a kayak expert to map waterways around the landing.

O'Rourke said his agency got numerous phone calls after the gate was closed, adding that it was closed for only a short time. "We can't afford to lose any boat landings," he said. "We're all over the place trying to find new ones. In fact, if someone asked what is our number-one need in this area, I would say places to launch."

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