

*Mayor and Town Council
Town of Friendsville
P.O. Box 9
Friendsville, MD 21531
Founded 1765*

February 16, 2023

Dear Honorable Senator Mike McKay and Honorable Delegate Jim Hinebaugh:

The Town of Friendsville is proud to be the gateway to Maryland's last remaining Scenic and Wild River corridor and to welcome visitors (on foot and by boat) to the pristine natural beauty accessed by the Kendall Trail. Dozens of banners are prominently displayed throughout our community proclaiming Friendsville as the "Wild and Scenic Adventure Capital of Maryland". We treasure this unique river resource and believe it to be one of our greatest economic generators in its current Wild status. We want it to remain that way.

When the Town first learned of the Continental Divide Loop Trail (CDLT) section planned between Sang Run and Friendsville, we understood that it would remain primitive and developed within the strict confines of existing regulations. During this planning phase, we acknowledged route options for use of the Kendall Trail in Friendsville, which leads to other unmarked trails remaining on the eastern side of the river to Sang Run. We also acknowledged the option to use commercial river rafting instead of developing trails to make a "river trail" leg of the CDLT; this already-functioning option has existed for over forty years.

However, \$4 million in state funding has been designated for a proposed "high development" trail. Building bridges, cutting down trees, pouring concrete, grading/paving with gravel, and providing the construction support necessary for these operations is way outside of what we understand to be consistent with the "primitive" designation as detailed in the regulations. We feel it's necessary to protect the diversity found there. According to Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) there are at least 11 animal and 15 plant species that are threatened or endangered on a statewide or national basis. The remote and rugged character of much of the river corridor is partly responsible for the presence of viable populations of these rare and endangered species. We cannot in good faith destroy this wilderness area which is unlike any other to be found.

Any plan to develop trails within the Scenic and Wild section of the Youghiogheny River must first conform to three non-negotiable requirements: 1) Compliance with the Scenic and Wild Rivers Act; 2) Permissible under DNR's river regulations (COMAR) and 3) Consistent with the 1996 Youghiogheny River Management Plan. The high-development trail (including several bridges across the corridor) that has been proposed is inconsistent with all three of these requirements.

We propose the \$4 million for trail development still be spent on the CDLT, but in a way that we absolutely support. We would like the money spent on the CDLT section between Friendsville and Youghiogheny Lake instead of the protected section of river corridor. This lake section is in Garrett County where the money needs to stay. It is not within the area designated Scenic and Wild and would include an attractive new bridge spanning the Youghiogheny River on existing bridge trestles that have been inspected by engineers. Adjacent to our beautiful Community Park, this bridge would make the CDLT connection and add immense tourism value to our park.

On behalf of myself and Town Council, who unanimously support this letter, request that you please do not support the high-development trail concept within the Scenic and Wild section of our river. Instead consider this alternative use of state funding for trails in our county and including an attractive new bridge spanning the Youghiogheny River on the existing bridge trestles adjacent to our park.

If you need any additional information, or I can be of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact me via town hall 301.746.5919 or my cell 301.501.1605. We look forward to working together in support of our town and county. I can also be reached via email at srschlosnagle@gmail.com.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Spencer R. Schlosnagle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Spencer" and last name "Schlosnagle" being more prominent.

Spencer R. Schlosnagle
Mayor

Cc:

The Honorable Governor Wes Moore, Secretary Josh Kurtz, The Honorable Garrett County Commissioners Paul Edwards, Ryan Savage and Larry Tichnell

Bcc:

Teresa McMinn, Cumberland Times News
Brenda Ruggiero, The Republican News