

Restoring Potomac River Public Access at Fletcher's Cove

The Problem:

Fletcher's Cove is a revered outdoor resource located just below the fall line in the Potomac Gorge, within the C&O Canal National Historical Park. As the highest navigable point on the tidal Potomac River, this unique inlet has played an important role in the region's history. Today, Fletcher's is best known as a prime fishing, kayaking, and canoeing destination. The site is one of few public access points where visitors can access the Potomac River.

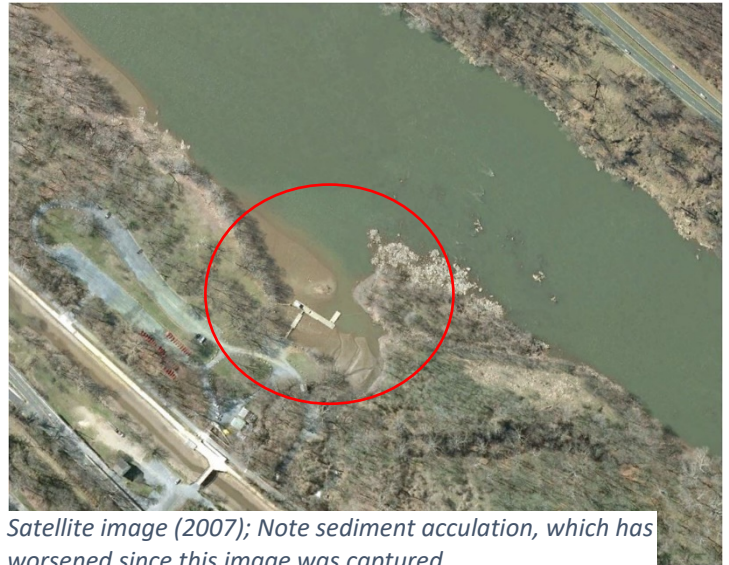
Fletcher's long-standing reputation is at risk due to a man-made impediment that is causing the Cove to rapidly fill in with sediment, straining existing infrastructure and limiting the site's functionality as an access point. The Friends of Fletcher's Cove (FFC) is a local volunteer organization that is working to address the site's deteriorating public infrastructure to benefit outdoor recreation in the National Capital Region.



A 1960s construction project altered the natural flow of the river, creating siltation issues at Fletcher's Cove.



Aerial photo (1955) pre-impediment; Fletcher's provides direct access to the river.



Satellite image (2007); Note sediment acculation, which has worsened since this image was captured.

Proposed Solution:

FFC is working with the District of Columbia, DOI and the National Park Service, a broad array of outdoor groups, and regional members of Congress to identify, fund, and implement an access solution at Fletcher's Cove. Restoring access will require a multi-phase approach to address both (1) the immediate condition of public access facilities, and (2) the fundamental dysfunction that is at the root of the sediment issue.

Phase I: Soil and Sediment Testing

Fall 2019; cost: \$70K, **Completed**

- Executed by Tetra Tech (GSG).
- Sampled and tested berm soil and Cove sediment to assess chemical and physical characterization of fill

Contact:

Rob Catalanotto, rcatalanotto@tu.org, (202) 669-8706

Friends of Fletcher's Cove

- Informed estimated cost of subsequent project phases (reflected below)
- Fully funded by DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE).
- Testing results concluded that surrounding soil and sediment does not contain major risks to public health. Dredged material is approved for industrial use.



Phase II: Emergency / Short-term Maintenance Dredging

Winter 2021; estimated cost: \$1.1M

- Short-term dredging plan, like successful projects in 1980s and 1990s, to address the immediate siltation, infrastructure decay and public river access issues.
- Goal is to provide reliable access to Fletcher's Cove for several years, while long-term plan is developed.
- Includes funding for hydrology study to examine conditions and determine best long-term solution.
- Request made w/ positive traction through DOI / NPS for FY22 Great American Outdoors Act funding (Legacy Restoration Fund).

Phase III: Long-term Access Plan

Post-Phase II Dredging

- Informed by Phase II hydrology study.
- Removal or alteration of man-made structure to restore historic river function and allow the Cove to flush naturally.

Low water jeopardizes river access.



Restricted Access at Fletcher's Cove

Contact:

Rob Catalanotto, rcatalanotto@tu.org, (202) 669-8706