

Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park

1920 Eagle Drive, Baltimore, MD 21207
www.friendsofgwynnsfalls/leakinpark.org

September 12, 2018

Dear Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park,

Board of Directors

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2018 has been a very difficult year for our park. This spring we saw approximately 700 mature trees felled so that a natural gas pipeline could be run through the park. The loss of habitat has been immense. This spring and summer, heavy rains, no doubt fueled by human-forced climate change, and exacerbated by the vast amounts of impervious surface in the watershed, caused flooding of Dead Run. This resulted in damage to Franklinton Road and the Gwynns Falls Trail, both of which remain impassable in some areas at the time of this letter. The area near the Winans Meadow parking lot was also heavily damaged.

This spring our organization learned of a new threat to the park: three stream restoration projects are planned for interior, forested parts of the park. These projects were designed to help the city comply with its “MS4” permit, which aims to clean up the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay by preventing trash, chemicals, sewage, and other pollutants from entering streams that lead to the Bay. We have also heard that more projects in the area will follow.

The Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park wholeheartedly supports efforts to clean up our watershed and the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately, we do not believe that these projects will do that. As they are currently designed, these projects do not address any sewage leaks and, in fact, contain only very minor work to the sewage system. They do not seek to replace parking lots with green spaces or other less destructive but proven storm water recovery technologies. Instead, the projects seek to reduce sediment entering the harbor by reconstructing the stream beds of three unnamed tributaries that enter into the Dead Run. These tributaries are by-and-large within interior, forested areas of the park and thus access roads will need to be created to accommodate the bulldozers and backhoes required for the project. It is estimated that several hundred mature trees will need to be felled. No construction is planned for the Dead Run itself which is severely eroded and easily accessible by pre-existing roads.

It is our belief that these projects will not meaningfully reduce pollution in the Bay and will be devastating to the local forest. The stream valleys will be transformed into forest edges by the loss of large trees, removal of topsoil and

introduction of invasive plants. Furthermore, these projects do not address the main issues which are excessive impervious surfaces and aging sewage systems. We believe the citizens of Baltimore deserve better.

We invite you to read the following document in order to understand the work planned in your park. We have requested the Department of Public Works to further evaluate the efficacy and environmental impacts of these projects prior to proceeding. The Department of Recreation and Parks has requested a temporary hold on stream restorations in City parks, but all indications are that the projects will ultimately proceed as planned. If you are interested in becoming an advocate for Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, please consider joining our organization. The yearly fee is nominal and information is available on our website, www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org. Lastly, we would like to invite you to enjoy the Park. There is a free 5k Run/Walk every Saturday, with details at parkrun.us.leakinpark. There are gentle hikes every Thursday and kids' activities on Second Sundays, April through November. Our board members are always present at these events and would be happy to speak with you about the MS4 projects in particular and advocacy for the Park in general. Thank you for your continued interest and support of The Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park. For additional information, please visit our website, www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org or contact Bridget McCusker at mccbrid@gmail.com.

Warm Regards,

Bridget McCusker, President
The Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park