

Dear Dr Merrifield, Mr Miller and Ms Smith:

No doubt, you have heard of the proposed Zip Line in James River Park.

I'd like to comment on the Conservation Easement aspects of this, since the CE covers the entirety of Belle Isle.

While the easement allows for the construction of recreation facilities, and this zip line could be potentially construed as a recreational activity, I think its construction, the requisite infrastructure, and the excessive impacts on the natural landscape of Belle Isle that access to it would cause, would result in a significant diminishment of the conservation values on Belle Isle — Natural Resources, Conservation, Historic and Landscape. I think the intent of the CE was to restrict inappropriate recreational uses, and essentially allow muscle powered activities.

Perhaps more importantly, the CE clearly prohibits any and all commercial activity on any of the CE properties, so I hope that would be sufficient grounds to stop further consideration of the use of Belle Isle for such a disruptive use.

Lastly, I'd like to mention that I sit on the DCR-appointed State Scenic River Advisory Committee for the section of the James in the City Limits, known as the Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee. We are charged to protect the Scenic, Natural Resources, Historic and wilderness conservation qualities of the James River — and promulgate policies and comment on appropriate and inappropriate uses of the James in the City.

We believe that protecting and preservation the natural beauty and wildness of the James through its entire "Fall Zone" is of the utmost importance. We believe that any new or proposed facilities on the Riverfront, from Interstate-95 west, must be evaluated on its impact to the natural and wild character of America's First River, and we believe that it should remain as unaltered as possible, from I-95 up to the western City Limits.

Note that the I-95 bridge boundary is somewhat of a generalization, because the land and water is east of the Fall Line and essentially flat. However, keep in mind that the Great Shiplock Park, parts of Chapel Island, Libbie Terrace and Chimborazo Park are historic, as are parts of the southern James shoreline with its Slave Trail, so all these areas warrant our protection.

For example, restoring the missing links in the Vepco Levee bridge for Bike and Ped uses is a good project which we support. We would strongly oppose a zip line anywhere west of I-95, and could only conceive of allowing such a structure at the most southern part of the James, near the City limits, where some connections between Rocketts and Ancarrows might be appropriate — such as water taxis, or a pedestrian bridge.

Please set the record straight as soon as possible and defend Belle Isle's Conservation Easement restrictions from here on out.

Sincerely,

John J Zeugner, AICP  
Friends of James River Park