

March 29, 2023

Governor Jim Justice
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E
Charleston, WV 25305
<https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wv/governor/contactus>

Re: WV State Parks Request for Proposals for Cacapon Resort State Park Should Be Withdrawn

Dear Governor Justice:

I write to request that you and your Administration immediately withdraw the Request for Proposals for a campground for Cacapon Resort State Park in Berkeley Springs ("RFP") issued on December 16, 2022 by Bradley R. Reed, Chief of Parks. I urge you and the Administration to terminate this RFP process and establish a meaningful process for public input for the future of Cacapon Resort State Park.

I live in Berkeley Springs and frequently take advantage of this park. This historic park is a treasure, enabling people to enjoy the wooded outdoors, hiking and biking trails, the recently expanded Lodge and longstanding, popular cabins, golf, fishing, shooting skeet, swimming and, boating, viewing wildlife and enjoying the peaceful surroundings of assorted varieties of trees, flowers, waterways and wildlife.

The RFP was drafted without adequate, if any, public input. There is no valid reason for the failure to give the public the opportunity to submit suggestions for an RFP that could have such huge impacts on this park. For this reason alone, the RFP should be withdrawn and there should be a meaningful process for the public's voice to be heard on the contents of the RFP. But there are more reasons for this request.

The RFP's contents are fundamentally inappropriate in several ways. Most importantly, the RFP is written in such a way as to rule out the possibility of sensible, effective options for the development of additional camping and recreational facilities at the park. Overall, the RFP's approach virtually guaranteed that the only successful proposal would be one that included a very large development of recreational vehicle sites and recreational facilities, so large that the development would be inconsistent with the character as well as the scale of this modest-sized park. The RFP in effect rules out smaller, less intrusive development that would be consistent with the park's size and character and would not eliminate many of the attributes that give so much enjoyment to visitors. There are other options for which the RFP should allow.

The RFP fails to carry out the stated mission of West Virginia State Parks: "To promote conservation by preserving and protecting West Virginia's natural areas and to provide unmatched outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the Mountain State." The RFP's emphasis on carving out a large-scale RV campground disproportionate to the size and character of the park would constitute the opposite of "conservation." The RFP's impact would be to ruin outdoor recreational opportunities for many current and future park visitors. Contrary to the mission, the RFP emphasizes the state's desire to have a private corporation generate a profit for the corporation that would be shared with the state. In fact, three of the RFP's goals for the project refer to obtaining "the highest possible return on investment for the Vendor and WVDNR." The state park system's mission would be contradicted by this evident desire for a project to maximize profit at the expense of the enjoyment of this park's features.

The economic and financial assumptions underlying the RFP also need to be discussed through a public process that would shape a future RFP. A private corporation based in Berkeley Springs has spent two years developing a large RV campground under the KOA brand that will be located just a few miles from the park. There should be serious consideration of whether it makes economic and environmental sense to build a new, large RV campground at the park in these circumstances. In addition, the RFP does not seem to require proposals to identify what will happen if a large RV campground is built but is not profitable enough, or the business at the park fails entirely. Businesses fail all the time. Any proposal should disclose how the park system and taxpayers will be protected by a private corporation's demise. Equally important, the state's RFP should require bidders to discuss the risks, consequences and responses of such a failure for the park's natural environment.

The upcoming public hearing on April 18 cannot solve this utterly defective RFP's flaws because the hearing will focus on the state's evaluation of the proposals it received in response to the RFPj's inappropriate criteria.

I submit this request – knowing that there are many other citizens who strongly oppose this RFP -- because I truly appreciate Cacapon State Resort Park and want even more people to enjoy it in the future. This Request for Proposal is fundamentally flawed and should be withdrawn immediately.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bruce Goldstein
881 Parkside Drive
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411

Cc: Bradley R. Reed, Chief of Parks
Brett W. McMillion, Secretary of Commerce
James Bailey, Secretary of Commerce
Sen. Charles S. Trump IV
Sen. Craig P. Blair
Del. George Miller
Del. Darren Thorne
Commissioner Sean Forney
Commissioner Joel Tuttle
Commissioner Bill Clark