



## **Cacapon Resort State Park Foundation**

818 Cacapon Lodge Drive  
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411

January 26, 2023

Bradley R. Reed  
Chief of Parks  
WV Division of Natural Resources  
Parks and Recreation Section  
324 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
South Charleston, WV 25303

Brad:

As directed in your memo dated June 2, 2022, we take seriously the memo's Specific Requirement #1 of furthering the goals of beautiful Cacapon Resort State Park as we have been honored to do for the past thirty-four years. Over these many years the commitment, hard work and talents of so many of our members have resulted in numerous projects being completed which enhance the experience of its visitors from near and far. Our deep commitment to this park is the context for the thoughts we share with you regarding the campground and recreational facilities RFP that was posted on December 16, 2022.

Given its beauty, location, amenities and proximity to major urban areas, there is no doubt that Cacapon is poised to play a significant role in the future of West Virginia State Parks, not to mention the economic benefit of the state overall. We applaud all that Cacapon has become and understand the desire to expand its capabilities through private partnerships. We respectfully request that the following observations be considered in the selection process that will occur at the conclusion of this RFP process.

It is important at the outset to clearly state that our concerns are based on the sheer size and scope of any project (RV park or any other) and the resulting impact on Cacapon's ability to preserve and protect its natural areas of exceptional scenic, scientific, cultural, archeological and historic significance, while providing outdoor recreational opportunities for its visitors.

The one area that is suggested in the RFP is located behind the Nature Center and may be the one area that legitimately should have been excluded from consideration for preservation purposes alone. It is a wetlands area and home to a network of numerous streams that are part of the protected Chesapeake Bay Watershed and situated in a forest with documented old growth. Disruption of this fragile area by a project of any size would be completely counter to the underlying purpose of our parks. **Section 9K** of the RFP states that Cacapon is a LWCF protected area.

Although educational concerns are not referenced in the RFP, the Nature Center and its surrounding areas are a critical symbiotic unit at Cacapon and should not be separated by a proposed project. The habitats in the diverse environment surrounding the Nature Center are routinely used for naturalist-led, hands-on educational instruction for visitors of all ages including school and civic groups. A special focus of the Nature Center is the preservation of the Monarch butterfly for which it is a certified way station and in addition is home to numerous pollinator gardens. The loss of access to these habitats would be very detrimental to the guided hands-on investigation of nature which is a sought-after experience of its visitors from near and far. These unique habitats would be destroyed by this project. Additionally, Cacapon has hosted the West Virginia State Envirothon competition in the past and it is scheduled to be held at Cacapon State Park again this year. The Envirothon includes high school teams from throughout West Virginia who perform competitive testing in the following categories: forestry, soils, water and wildlife. The area behind the Nature Center is a favored testing location for this competition because it contains a Class A stream (free of pollutants) among its diverse habitats and is planned to be used in years ahead.

As you know, and have been instrumental in making it happen, Cacapon has been extremely fortunate to be the recipient of a number of extraordinary grants from West Virginia and federal sources for major mountain bike trail design and build projects totaling in the millions of dollars. It has become an important destination for mountain bikers from near and far and has brought considerable revenue to the park and surrounding jurisdictions. The boggy area behind the Nature Center borders a number of these trails that have been carefully designed to avoid disturbing the streams contained therein. **Section 9H** of the RFP references this issue of avoiding the trails but perhaps not strongly enough. If these trails are destroyed to make way for a new project, it would be an embarrassment that the state would invest so much of its resources in the Cacapon trails, only to turn around and allow them to be destroyed. Not to mention the toll it would take on the hundreds of volunteers and enthusiasts who have wholeheartedly embraced these trails through their physical labor and monetary support. **Section 9K** of the RFP includes references to the need to preserve CCC elements which are found all throughout the park. Artifacts continue to be found in the area surrounding the Nature Center where CCC members, such as blacksmiths, worked. In fact, the paid and volunteer trail builders took the talent of the "CCC boys" to heart and replicated their signature stone work on the trails as often as possible.

We have recently learned that a representative of NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) has voiced concern about the possibility of a campground infringing on the Rock & Roll trail and indicated

they will be forced to pull the large annual event for middle and high school students from Cacapon if the trail is damaged or changed.

Two locations other than the area behind the Nature Center have been suggested as sites that are relatively flat and scenic. They would have minimal, if any, impact on the watershed and would not interfere with existing or future bike trails. One location is between the reservoir and the cabin loop trail. This location would allow proximity to many park amenities and would have access to water, sewer and power. The second location that has been identified is in the water tower/golf course reservoir area. This location would provide a secluded and peaceful recreational experience in a wooded environment. We respectfully request that these two sites be given serious consideration for a project of this size and scope as it will minimize the negative impact and preserve the natural and historical aspects of Cacapon. Speaking of which, we are hopeful that any project being considered for Cacapon will bear in mind the limited flat areas found there and scale the project accordingly. **Section 6B** of the RFP addresses the desire for a "park-like" setting and not a "parking lot" with which we agree wholeheartedly.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and requests. We are hopeful that Cacapon's next partnership will be a perfect fit for its size and topography and continue the legacy of this treasured park for years to come.

Sincerely yours,



Jim Michael  
President