

A Guide to the Catoctin Dam Project Papers, 1974-1975

Catoctin Dam Project Papers 1974-1975
1974-1975

A Collection in the Thomas Balch Library SC 0011
Thomas Balch Library
2006
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History

Processed by: Rebecca Ottinger

Title Statement

A Guide to the Catoctin Dam Project Papers, 1974-1975

Subtitle: Catoctin Dam Project Papers

Collection: SC 0011

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Publication Statement

Date: © 2006 By Thomas Balch Library. All rights reserved.

Publisher: Thomas Balch Library

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid derived from MS Word, created by Beth Schuster, 26 February 2008

Language Usage: Description is in English

Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Collection number

SC 0011

Language

English

Abstract

In mid-1974, announcements were made almost simultaneously by the Fairfax County Water Authority and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that Catoctin Creek was a prime candidate for a dam and reservoir impounding water for a 7-day supply for the Washington, DC area during drought periods. This plan would have flooded more than 3,000 acres of Loudoun County, including the hamlet of Taylorstown, VA and part of Waterford, VA. Residents of this area organized the Catoctin Valley Defense Alliance to fight the project. Their strategies included 1) Achieving "scenic river" designation for Catoctin Creek 2) Having Taylorstown listed on the National Register of Historic Places 3) Getting an amendment to Virginia's eminent domain statute preventing one jurisdiction from obtaining water supply from a neighboring jurisdiction without permission of the affected jurisdiction 4) A public relations campaign to bring attention to this action. The collection contains letters, articles, notes, and other information from 5 Jun 1974 until 28 Jan 1975.

Collector

Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library

Extent

3 folders

Repository

Thomas Balch Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open to research.

Use Restrictions

No physical characteristics affect the use of this material.

Acquisition Information

Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library, VA

Processing Information

Processed by Rebecca Ottinger, 11 Sep 2006

Formerly filed as NUCMC 7

Preferred Citation

Catoctin Dam Project Papers, 1974-1975 (SC 0011), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA.

Accruals

1990.0002

Alternative Form Available

None

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Related Material

None

Bibliography

Interview, Philip Ehrenkranz, 27 Nov 2006. United States Congress, Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000672> Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia House of Delegates:
<http://del.state.va.us/dela/Membios.nsf/94f6e9b9c9b5678f85256b1b00732227/5cd1606dcacb8ff985256c1b0058cac8?OpenDocument> Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia House of Delegates:
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Other Finding Aid

None

Historical Information

In mid-1974, announcements were made almost simultaneously by the Fairfax County Water Authority and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that Catoctin Creek was a prime candidate for a dam and reservoir impounding water for a 7-day supply for the Washington, DC area during drought periods. This plan would have flooded more than 3,000 acres of Loudoun County, including the hamlet of Taylorstown, VA and part of Waterford, VA. Residents of this area organized the Catoctin Valley Defense Alliance to fight the project. Their strategies included 1) Achieving "scenic river" designation for Catoctin Creek 2) Having Taylorstown listed on the National Register of Historic Places 3) Getting an amendment to Virginia's eminent domain statute preventing one jurisdiction from obtaining water supply from a neighboring jurisdiction without permission of the affected jurisdiction 4) A public relations campaign to bring attention to this action.

The first part of the plan was to get the Commonwealth of Virginia to name Catoctin Creek a scenic river; this action would provide protection by the state through the Commission on Outdoor Recreation. The County of Loudoun decided to seek this status for both Goose Creek and Catoctin Creek and to concentrate on Goose Creek first. The Catoctin Valley Defense Alliance, recognizing that, because of the amount of work necessary to obtain this status, it was highly unlikely that Loudoun County would get two creeks named in the same year, approached the Commission and offered to do much of the work necessary to achieve this designation for Catoctin Creek. The Piedmont Environmental Council prepared the technical report and members of the Alliance obtained the necessary signatures of two-thirds of the affected landowners, and from the owners of two-thirds of the riparian land. With this preparatory work done, a bill to

declare Catoctin Creek a scenic river was introduced into the Virginia General Assembly by Senator Charles Waddell and was passed. The effect of this action was twofold: 1) No obstruction can be built on this stream without legislative approval 2) It gave notice to the Army Corps of Engineers that the State of Virginia would not passively let them take whatever action they wished.

The second strategy involved gaining historic status for the small village of Taylorstown. This effort involved approximately sixty four acres belonging to five landowners in the central part of the community which would have been the deepest part of the reservoir. They were successful in obtaining listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation would not prevent any action, such as building a dam; however, it would require that whatever federal agency proposed the action would be required to prepare an environmental impact statement, thus slowing the action.

The third plan of attack was to seek an amendment to Virginia's eminent domain statute, a proposal also being sought by a legislator in Tidewater Virginia. House Bill No. 921, introduced into the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia on February 11, 1974, contained the following wording, "No municipal corporation, after July one, nineteen hundred seventy-four shall construct, provide or operate without the boundaries of such municipal corporation any water supply system prior to obtaining the consent of the county or municipality in which system is to be located;...." Representing the Alliance, Anna Hedrick and Philip Ehrenkranz (b 1939) testified at the legislative hearings in support of the bill, which was passed by the General Assembly of Virginia in 1975.

Finally the Alliance launched a public relations and political campaign to gain attention by the media and elected officials for this struggle. During the mid-1970s, newspapers including The Washington Post, The Richmond News-Leader, and all those in Loudoun, published editorials condemning the dam proposal. Congressman Frank R. Wolf (b 30 Jan 1936), Senator Charles Waddell, and Delegates Earl E. Bell (b 10 May 1920) and Kenneth B. Rollins (b 16 Jan 1936) all came out against it. The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved resolutions opposing the project, and members of the Fairfax Board opposed it as well.

The successful strategies employed by the alliance served to put the would-be dam into governmental limbo. Ehrenkranz, who had been appointed by the Board of Supervisors as Loudoun's representative to The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Water Committee, monitored all developments relevant to area water supply. A highly significant development occurred in 1979, when the technical staff of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin released a study concluding that adequate water supplies could best be assured by interconnecting the area's existing reservoirs. The Corps did not react to this alternative for over a year. Then, at a meeting attended by Ehrenkranz at COG in 1981, a Corps representative announced that the Catoctin project would be abandoned. Ehrenkranz was advised off-the-record that among the factors motivating the Corps decision were the interconnection proposal and public opposition to the dam and reservoir.

Two years would pass before the Corps announcement was confirmed in its 1983 edition of "Water Forum Notes." The headline reads, "Corps Study Concludes That Future Water Supply Needs Can Be Met With Existing Resources." Importantly, the article states, "Development of Local Reservoir sites (including Catoctin Creek) undoubtedly would fact strong publish opposition which would likely represent a significant obstacle to implementation."

Scope and Content

The collection contains letters, articles, notes, and other information from 5 Jun 1974 until 28 Jan 1975.

Contents List

Folder 1: Letters, Articles and Notes , 1974, n.d.

Scope and Content

- Letter dated 29 Aug 1974 from H.H. Douglas to Miss Anna Hedrick offering assistance in stopping construction of dam on Catoctin Creek
- Letter dated 15 Oct 1974 to Phillip Ehrenkranz seeking information concerning houses on a tour
- Attached to previous letter but undated notes regarding: Taylorstown Mill, the John S. Hutchison House, Foxton Cottage, Clover Hill, Conrad Virts' House. Blank sheets listing Footloose, Fancy Free, Hunting Hill, and Catoctin Mill Farm
- Letter, undated, but after tour to Raynold Cheronis about his house
- Letter dated 16 Oct 1974 to Raynold Cheronis regarding his house which would be flooded by the dam on the Catoctin Creek
- Notes dated 10-28-74
- Memo dated 4 Nov 1974 to members of Fairfax County Board of Supervisors from Supervisor Audrey Moore regarding control of water supply projects
- Letter of 7 Nov 1974 from Audrey Moore concerning control of water supply projects
- Memo dated 25 Nov 1974 from Audrey Moore to Fairfax County Board of Supervisors regarding responsibility for water projects
- Notes dated 12-12-74 listing names of people to contact regarding the dam project
- Correspondence dated 18 Dec 1974 seeking help in stopping construction of Dam on Catoctin Creek. Each letter mentions enclosure of current issue of *Echoes of History*.
- Letters to H.H. Douglas in response to letters of 18 Dec 1974
- Undated notes of names, addresses and phone numbers
- Article by Ray Cheronis regarding his house, Foxton Cottage, Taylorstown, VA
- Miscellaneous undated notes
- Undated, unsigned notes regarding the proposed Catoctin Dam Project and its effect Taylorstown

Folder 2: Letters, Articles and Notes , 1974, n.d.

Scope and Content

- Article entitled "Millford," dated 26 Aug 1974 by John G. Lewis
- Ticket for Taylorstown House Tour, 12 Oct 1974
- Article by Raynold Cheronis entitled "Restoration Project"
- Undated article entitled "Catoctin Valley Threatened by Dam"
- Undated notes
- Copy of Code of Virginia 15.1-1239-15.1-1270, 15.1-1285-15.1-1310, 15.1-1056-15.1-1266
- Title Notes in Reference to Stone House and 1 plus acres, Ray and Ruth Cheronis
- Catoctin Valley Report, 30 Aug 1974, prepared by the staff of Piedmont Environmental Council, Warrenton, VA
- Article dated 9-15-74 from the Catoctin Valley Defense Alliance, P.O. Box 11, Waterford, Virginia 22190

Folder 3: Letters, Articles and Notes , 1974, n.d.

Scope and Content

- "New Metropolitan Water Study," *Piedmont Virginian*, 5 Jun 1974
- "Hamlet to Fight Watery Demise," *Washington Star-News*, 9 Jun 1974
- "Taylorstown residents ready to fight," *Piedmont Virginian*, 12 Jun 1974
- "Taylorstown organizes," *Piedmont Virginian*, 19 Jun 1974
- "Loudoun County Residents Mount Opposition to Dam," *Washington Post*, 20 Jun 1974
- "Anti-dam Taylorstown tour arranged," *Piedmont Virginian*, 2 Oct 1974
- "'Don't Dam Loudon' (sic) House Tour," (attributed to *Star*, 5 Oct 1974)
- "Taylorstown: A Lot to Lose," (identified only from Section R, Metro Virginia News)