



RAPIDAN MOUNTAIN RETREAT

Statement of the Rapidan Camps

Opposing opening the Quaker Run/Rapidan Road gate into Shenandoah National Park

Rapidan Camps, Inc. is unequivocally and unanimously opposed to the recent request by the Madison County Board of Supervisors to open the Shenandoah National Park's (Park) gate on the Quaker Run/Rapidan Road, and permit unlimited vehicle entry and access into the Park.

Regardless of the non-binding and historically moot point of a presidential "promise" made before the Shenandoah National Park was even established, the facts are clear and uncontrovertible. In 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt vetoed a bill that would have made capital improvements to Rapidan Road, and in March, 1941, at the request of the Virginia Highway Department, the Madison County Board voted unanimously, without noted opposition, to abandon the 4.6 mile portion of the Road ending at the gate. The County had the opportunity, and did not oppose, the abandonment.

Four primary issues are at stake here—property rights; the preservation of the pristine and irreplaceable Rapidan River and Shenandoah Park environment; our Camp's safety and security; and the unmaintained and possibly dangerous condition of the Road.

Rapidan Camps was constructed in 1931, on the Rapidan Road and Rapidan River, as an adjunct facility for Camp Hoover, and has been a long-established, incorporated business in Madison County since 1953. Our Camp's historic ties to Camp Hoover are a part of our unique legacy and tradition in the area and to our members. The deed to our Camp includes half the width of the Quaker Run/Rapidan Road for the length of the Camps' property, and the entire width of the Road directly over our Camp's water line (see below). *Yet Rapidan Camps was never contacted regarding the request to open the gate.* As such, in order to maintain the historic nature, environmental integrity, and basic safety of our Camp, we must raise an obvious, strenuous objection to this large proposed increase in the number of vehicles traversing our Camp's property.

In addition, opening the gate to public vehicle access raises a direct and imminent threat to the unique and irreplaceable environment of the Shenandoah National Park, the Rapidan Wildlife Management Area, and the Rapidan River—particularly our air and water quality. The Rapidan River is currently listed by Trout Unlimited as one of "America's 100 Best Trout Streams"—and is currently a prized recreation destination for countless fly fishers.

Yet if this gate is opened, fifty average passenger vehicles a day making the trip from Quaker Run Rd. to Big Meadows and back will, according to the EPA, add nearly four tons of carbon dioxide to our air each week—in addition to carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and methane. The road is also extremely rough and unpaved, and this vehicle traffic will greatly increase soot and both coarse and fine particulate matter as inhalable pollutants. This particulate matter, combined with erosion from the unpaved road will, in the form of water-borne runoff, increase sedimentation and drastically decrease the pristine water quality of the Rapidan River vital for trout spawning.

In short, *increased* air and water pollution—and *increased* ambient noise levels from *increased* traffic—will irreversibly jeopardize native plant and wildlife, and threaten the unique environment enjoyed by a wide array of recreational users—including campers, hikers, fly fishers, hunters, horse riders, and many others.

A third problem directly affects the safety and security of our Camp. As mentioned, the water supply for our entire Camp is fed by a water line to a spring house which runs directly under the Road. The depth of this water line is relatively shallow, and any increase in passenger vehicle traffic—much less larger vehicles or construction equipment needed to improve and maintain the Road—would jeopardize the very lifeblood and operations of our Camp.

Finally, we must object to the assertion or assumption that the Quaker Run/Rapidan Road is either currently well-maintained or easily navigable. As regular users of the unpaved length of the Road past the end of State maintenance, we are thoroughly familiar with the inadequate and unforgiving nature of the Road for sustained or regular vehicle traffic—particularly any vehicles with two-wheel drive and/or low ground clearance. We should further emphasize the hazards posed by the Road to drivers unfamiliar with its unpredictable and often dangerous terrain—including sharp or steep turns, exposed rocks, gullies and potholes, loose soil and gravel, erosion, and frequent downed trees. Indeed, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries states, on their own website, in a very understated way:

“Be advised, wildlife management area roads, and roads leading to the area beyond state maintained portions, are narrow and not maintained to VDOT standards and can be rough.”

The request by the County to open the gate has been made with no examination of the environmental and economic consequences of increased traffic on the Shenandoah National Park, the Rapidan Wildlife Management Area, or affected local landowners such as Rapidan Camps. We strongly recommend that the Park assess the environmental impact of this proposal, as well as the propriety of public use of the Road leading to Camp Hoover and Big Meadows. We further urge the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to assess the capital improvement and infrastructure requirements needed to adequately accommodate this increased vehicle traffic on the Quaker Run/Rapidan Road before any such request is considered for approval by the Park.

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This is an ill-conceived and hastily approved request which should be promptly and decisively denied by the Shenandoah National Park.

Sincerely,

J.D. Foster
President

A. Antone Allen
Vice President

D. David Heiby
Treasurer

James Hazzard
Secretary

C. Roy Woodruff
Director

Tom Jones
Director

Robin Farrar
Director