



March 3, 2021

Honorable Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Need for NOVA Parks to increase funding and have a strategic plan for invasives and trash removal in their parkland in Arlington

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

NOVA Parks operates three parks within Arlington – Potomac Overlook Regional Park (PORP), Upton Hill Regional Park (UHRP), and 5 miles of the W&OD Trail (W&OD) – all of which make important contributions to Arlington’s green space and forest canopy. They contain spectacular features and attractions and are used by many Arlingtonians. Yet, visits to these parks indicate the current level of maintenance is inadequate. Upton Hill Park suffers from neglect with considerable non-native invasive plants and stormwater runoff problems, and persistent litter within and around its borders. Invasive plants are also a significant issue at Potomac Overlook Park and widespread across many areas of the W&OD trail.

The Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC) contacted NOVA Parks for their plans for maintaining and conserving the natural resources on their properties in Arlington. NOVA Parks’ response was not reassuring in that there does not seem to be a long-term plan or funding to address the problems beyond making use of occasional volunteer efforts.

Yet funds seemingly could be found for the needed maintenance. NOVA Parks anticipates generating significant new funding streams from recent projects at UHRP, according to the September 17, 2020, NOVA Parks Board meeting. NOVA Parks will obtain \$1 million in unrestricted funds after floating a \$3.5 million bond to finance the remaining construction at the park (only \$2.5 million is needed to complete the projects there, leaving \$1 million surplus). In addition, after an initial start-up period, NOVA Parks is anticipating an additional \$150,000 a year in revenue from the new climbing structure it will build at UHRP.

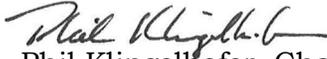
For years Arlingtonians have advocated for invasive plant management programs in all NOVA Parks properties. We ask that you direct Arlington’s two representatives to NOVA Parks to work with NOVA Parks to develop and implement a comprehensive invasives management program at PORP, UHRP, and W&OD. Additional resources should also be devoted to mitigate stormwater runoff, to maintain the forests, and to remove trash scattered within and along their edges.

Additional park maintenance will be particularly critical at Upton Hill. NOVA Parks is anticipating initially 13,000 users a year for the climbing structure, with an increase to an average of around 19,000 a year. This increased number of visitors will generate a

commensurate increase in trash and wear and tear on the park. It is imperative that NOVA Parks plan now for this increase and allocate resources accordingly.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and your support for preserving and expanding Arlington's tree canopy and natural areas.

Sincerely,



Phil Klingelhofer, Chair

Forestry and Natural Resources Commission

Cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation