



County Executive Steuart Pittman and
County Council Chair Julie Hummer
44 Calvert St
Annapolis Maryland, 21401

July 14, 2025

CC: Anne Arundel County Council
Jessica Leys, Director of Recreation and Parks

Honorable County Executive Pittman and County Council Chair Hummer,

Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. We have a vision of healthy waterways for all – **which includes access to those waterways for all**. We and the undersigned Anne Arundel County residents know the County Council and the Administration share this vision as well and **we urge you to seek immediate and long-lasting opportunities to provide public access to our waterways in South County and beyond**.

Public boat ramps like the one at Discovery Village are essential to ensuring equity of access to our natural resources, regardless of income or background. Anne Arundel County has a unique and proud maritime heritage, exemplified by the Discovery Village property. But that heritage becomes hollow if we allow public access points to be quietly reduced, one by one. The recent closure of the Discovery Village boat ramp has exposed a glaring issue: there is a clear lack of public access to our waterways across southern Anne Arundel County. Without the ramp at Discovery Village, many South County residents will be forced to travel over an hour to find a public ramp in Anne Arundel County.¹

One of the overarching themes identified in the adopted Plan2040 is maintaining community character, which includes enhancing and increasing public access to our waterfront. In a county with over 500 miles of shoreline, it is deeply concerning that there are only two public access points for boaters to utilize. We strongly urge the County to seek immediate and long-lasting commitments at properties like Discovery Village and others that will increase public access and achieve the stated goals of Plan2040. We know that all our elected officials share the same goal for expanded public access and we commend you, Mr. County Executive, for including continued funding for this ramp in the budget you submitted to the County Council and we

¹ Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks
<https://www.aacounty.org/recreation-parks/parks/popular-activities/boat-ramps>

completely agree with the sentiment you shared after the opening of the Discovery Village ramp in 2018 when you stated, “we need to expand water access for boating, kayaking, fishing, and swimming, but...we must engage local residents in the planning process.”² We hope this letter demonstrates that residents are eager to be engaged in that process and desire public boat ramp access at Discovery Village and other locations.

We also recognize the challenges inherent with the Discovery Village location including maintenance and high costs, but we must also acknowledge the impact to our communities when access is removed with little-to-no-warning during the peak recreational season. It is also deeply concerning that this site is now closed to public access after the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Waterway Improvement Fund and Maryland taxpayers contributed towards the installation of the boat ramp less than a decade ago.³ Access at this site should be maintained so that taxpayer dollars are not wasted and Marylanders everywhere can enjoy the beautiful rivers that we in Anne Arundel County call home.

We respectfully request that the County prioritize finding a solution immediately for the remainder of the 2025 boating season and invest in a long-term solution that provides more public access to waterways across South County and beyond.

Thank you for your continued commitment to public access and support of our communities, lands, and waters.

Sincerely,

Elle Bassett
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

On behalf of XXX Anne Arundel County Residents

² Capital Gazette

<https://www.capitalgazette.com/2018/08/31/shady-side-boat-ramp-adds-to-public-water-access-momentum/?clearUserState=true>

³ MD Department of Natural Resources.

<https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2017/06/14/departments-awards-10-5-million-to-enhance-boating-access-and-navigation/>