



In Reply Refer to:

**United States Department of the Interior  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK  
MAGGIE L. WALKER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
3215 EAST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23223-7517**



May 1, 2024

To the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee,

I am writing regarding the James River Park System (JRPS) and proposed improvements at Belle Isle.

I was recently joined by Richmond National Battlefield Park staff Stephanie Pooler, Chief of Interpretation and Education, and Park Ranger Historian Mike Gorman on a visit to Belle Isle to meet with Superintendent Giles Garrison and the team from JRPS to discuss interpretation of historic sites on Belle Isle. The visit also provided an opportunity for JRPS to review the park's plans to create new recreational amenities on the island with us, and for us to provide feedback.

We learned that JRPS proposed improvements include the creation of a Nature Exploration Area (NEA) under the Route 1 Bridge, reuse of the Old Dominion Iron and Steel Shed as a picnic shelter and learner's skate plaza, and essential repairs to park features, such as the Belle Isle Quarry Pond boardwalk and the southern access bridge. We also understand that an improved bicycle pump track and native landscaping are part of the plan.

Belle Isle is a key recreational space for the City of Richmond, and the site of Libby Prison, a Confederate prison during the American Civil War where many Union soldiers were imprisoned, suffered, and died. It is a significant site and an integral part of the history of Richmond. We are pleased to collaborate with JRPS staff as they work to enhance interpretation of that site and connect to its rich history.

The proposed Nature Exploration Area (NEA) will create opportunities for families and area youth to recreate at Belle Isle and connect to its important stories. We fully support JRPS' application for UDC conceptual review for the NEA and appreciate the opportunity to work with them.

Thank you and we hope to see you in the parks!

Sincerely,

Scott Teodorski, Superintendent  
Richmond National Battlefield Park  
Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site