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April 5, 2023

Via Email

Mr. Jeffrey Reinbold
Superintendent, NPS – National Mall and Memorial Parks
900 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Superintendent Reinbold:

We the undersigned write to express our concern for the proposed project: “Rehabilitate Tidal Basin and West Potomac Park Seawalls.” As proposed, this project can exacerbate flooding in the untreated areas of the Tidal Basin including the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, the Japanese Pagoda and Japanese Lantern. It is alarming that such national treasures could be put at such risk.

It is understood that the threat of flooding comes from the introduction of a rehabilitated seawall **and** from other climate change related events including the increase of storm surges and more frequent extreme rain events. This project does not account for these realities. Of note, the recent modest one-foot storm surge of March 25, 2023 created significant overtopping of the seawall and led to standing water all along the Tidal Basin including at the MLK Memorial, the Japanese Lantern and all the way to the FDR Memorial and the Japanese Pagoda. In addition, the proposed seawall in Tidal Basin West creates the potential for wraparound flooding that would directly impact the FDR Memorial and the Japanese Pagoda.

It has been reported that the flooding in Tidal Basin East can be alleviated with the restoration of the Tidal Basin Inlet gates to their historic function. As it is well known, the Army Corps of Engineers received funding to repair the gates. It is only sensible and good government to factor in these repairs to ensure a coordinated and fiscally responsible approach to the Tidal Basin.

No alternatives to the NPS plan have been proposed. This does not serve the public well. In addition to the concerns for significant damage and/or destruction of national memorials and cherished artwork along the Tidal Basin, the environmental assessment and geo tech reports discuss plans for the destruction of wetlands. This is troubling as wetlands defend against flooding. Wetlands and cultural resources enjoy protection from the National Environmental Protection Act.

We call on NPS to slow down this project to allow for additional voices to be heard especially scientists and coastal flooding experts and other concerned

citizens. We call for additional options for consideration that will protect all assets equally, account for climate change realities, and that coordinate at-the-ready flooding mitigation such as the inlet gates.

Sincerely,

Mary Dolan, Co-Founder and Executive Director, FDR Memorial Legacy Committee

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