



Dear ATC Members in Washington and Frederick Counties, Maryland:

I am writing you regarding the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's strong reservations regarding Washington County Division of Public Works' determination to build a 190-foot tower that will impact the Appalachian Trail, South Mountain State Park, and three National Park units near Sandy Hook, Maryland.

The proposed tower location can be seen as a white pole just below Maryland Heights on the enclosed photograph from the Appalachian Trail overlook at Weverton Cliff, where the county performed a crane test in July 2007. It is less than a mile from the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, less than a half-mile from the C&O Canal, and impacts the views from Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. This eyesore will dominate the views from "America's River"—the Potomac River at its confluence with the Shenandoah River—and from some of our country's most nationally significant historical and natural park lands.

*If you share our concern regarding this tower, we request that you send a letter, fax or e-mail message **IMMEDIATELY—the deadline is April 7**—to the Washington County Department of Public Works and to the Washington County Commissioners:*

Washington County – Div. of Public Works
100 West Washington Street, Room 238
Hagerstown, MD 21741-4738

Fax: 240-313-2251

Email: towercomments@washco-md.net

Washington County Commissioners
John Barr, Terry Baker, James Kercheval, William
Wivell, and Kristin Aleshire
100 West Washington Street, Room 226
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Fax: 240-313-2201

Email: commissioners@washco-md.net

Your name and address must be included for your comments to be considered.

The Division of Public Works held an information meeting March 26, but would not allow public comment other than this one short week for written input.

While the ATC and National Park Service are fully supportive of the need for good communication services for emergency personnel, the NPS has been unable to convince the county to look seriously at other alternatives that would achieve their objectives and protect the views from surrounding nationally significant NPS and state park areas. The NPS has met with them numerous times over the past year to voice its concerns, and has even offered sites on National Park Service lands through an exchange or lease arrangement with the county, but without success.

Please see the enclosed article from the Hagerstown *Herald Mail* for comments from National Park Service historian Dennis Frye regarding his concern that the county must consider available tower-location alternatives that will minimize the visual impacts of this new 190-foot tower as now proposed.

For more information, please contact Michele Miller at mmiller@appalachiantrail.org or 717-258-5771, ext. 204, or Bob Proudman at bproudman@appalachiantrail.org or 304-535-2200, ext 103.

REMEMBER: YOU MUST GET YOUR COMMENTS IN BY MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2008.

Karen L. Lutz, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director
Appalachian Trail Conservancy

The Herald-Mail ONLINE <http://www.herald-mail.com/>
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Pleasant Valley tower would be 'unsightly and unnecessary'

By HEATHER KEELS heather.keels@herald-mail.com

SANDY HOOK — A 190-foot emergency communications tower proposed for Pleasant Valley would be an "unsightly and unnecessary" intrusion into an area surrounded by three national parks, according to National Park Service officials opposed to the plan.

"That thing is going to look like an erector set sitting in the middle of a bucolic scene," said Dennis Frye, a Pleasant Valley native and chief historian at Harper's Ferry National Historical Park, which borders the proposed site.

As an alternative, NPS has suggested several potential sites on NPS land that the county could use to build multiple, shorter towers, Frye said.

Washington County officials said the alternative sites would not be sufficient for the tower's specifications.

"In order to get the level of service we need, long-term, we need a 190-foot tower in that spot," Washington County Commissioner James F. Kercheval said.

Most other sites that have been suggested either don't provide adequate coverage or would require a much taller tower, he said.

Frye said the county hasn't done enough research to rule out the alternatives yet. He said he would like to see National Park Service engineers work with engineers from Motorola, the county's contractor on the project, to study the sites.

In a letter to Washington County officials this week, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park superintendent Donald W. Campbell said NPS believes viable alternatives exist that would "provide and possibly improve" the coverage of the proposed tower.

For example, Frye said, the alternatives could improve coverage for the Potomac River corridor upriver from Maryland Heights, which is a heavily utilized recreational section, and provide coverage for the Dargan side of the river, where the county currently has little coverage.

Because National Park Service rangers are often the first responders to emergencies in the Sandy Hook and Harpers Ferry area, it is in the park service's interest to promote the improved emergency communication coverage, Frye said.

However, Frye said, the three, less-obtrusive communication towers already in Harpers Ferry National Park are proof that it is possible to provide services without disrupting the scenery.

"Our interest is to compromise with the county to provide similar coverage without the eyesore, and with technology and creative thinking it can be done," Frye said.

Staff Writer Joshua Bowman contributed to this report.