

12/20/00

To Whom It May Concern:

The Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, a chapter of the National Audubon Society with about 1200 members resident in the District, opposes reconstruction of the closed portion of Klinge Road. The Society wrote to Director Burns last year, urging DPW to stand by its 1995 decision, restore drainage of the watershed, and transfer the right-of-way to the National Park Service for use as a public, multipurpose recreational area. We said "this land has far more value as a functioning part of the Rock Creek watershed, as habitat for wildlife, and as public green space in the heart of DC than as a commuter corridor, one acknowledged to be difficult and expensive to maintain and often dangerous in winter."

Our Board of Directors has kept abreast of both sides of the controversy. Our position against reconstruction remains the same.

Members of the Society have conducted several informal bird walks along the closed portion of Klinge Road. Consistent with its character as a wooded buffer between Rock Creek Park and fully built-up areas, its abundance of mature deciduous trees, and the presence of standing water, the closed portion supports good numbers and variety of both resident and migratory birdlife. This includes highly visible species such as Pileated Woodpecker and Great Blue Heron.

The same hydrologic conditions which presently favor wildlife led to washout of the old roadbed and would add greatly to both construction and maintenance cost of the proposed through road. Other, non-controversial transportation projects in the District will be unfunded if Klinge Road is reopened. Reopening seems like a remarkably ineffective use of DC's transportation dollars, one that will result in the loss of a rare opportunity to add to, rather than diminish, urban green space.

Respectfully,
Beth Slikas, President
DC Audubon Society