NOVA PARKS
Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

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May 25, 2021

Mayor Wilson and City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: Accidental Discharge of Chlorinated Water in Lake Cook

Dear Mayor Wilson and Honorable Council Members,

As you know, there was a recent incident at Lake Cook that resulted in a fish kill. This was the result of an accidental discharge of pool water from Cameron Run. We are deeply sorry this accident occurred and want to take this opportunity to shed more light on what happened and how we have responded. We would also like to express our appreciation for the great professionalism of City Management, Fire Marshal, Transportation & Environmental Services and Stormwater Management staff who have worked with the NOVA Parks team to investigate and explore exactly what happened and seek solutions.

Impacts on Lake Cook:

Fortunately, chlorine is a substance that evaporates quickly from any body of water, particularly with sunshine and heat. It is not a chemical that will have lasting impacts. While about 150 fish in the lake died, the chlorine evaporated within several days, and the lake is scheduled to be restocked with fish in the next few weeks.

The pump/filter system and how the incident happened:

Cameron Run has four separate pump/filter systems for the different elements of the waterpark. The shallow children's pool and splash pad system is the pump/filter system connected to this incident. Thirteen years ago, we rebuilt that pump/filter facility. This new system is a closed-loop system. As such, it is not designed to be discharged the way it was on May 12.

A member of the NOVA Parks staff working on cleaning the pool for the upcoming season drained the children's pool. They did not realize that closed-loop system did not need to be discharged, and that the valve they used resulted in the pool water going into the lake. This discharge was not necessary, and better knowledge of the system could have prevented this accident.

City of Alexandria	Arlington County	Fairfax County	City of Fairfax	City of Falls Church	Loudoun County
Sean Kumar	Paul Ferguson	Patricia Harrison	Mark Chandler	Paul Baldino	James Bonfils
Scott Price	Michael A. Nardolilli	Stella Koch	Brian D. Knapp	Jeffrey Tarbert	Cate Magennis Wyatt

Also, as part of the pool cleaning efforts, NOVA Parks staff were also power washing the blue rubber surface of the splash pad and the slide catch pads in the children's pool area. In this cleaning process, some blue residue from the rubberized surface made it into a storm drain. This created a small area with a blueish look where this also entered Lake Cook.

Timeline:

- Wednesday, May 12, 2021
  On this day, the children's pool was drained, and the power washing of the blue rubberized splash pad and slide pad areas took place.

- Thursday, May 13, 2021
  The fish kill in the lake was noticed in the morning, and the City's Fire Marshal toured Cameron Run with NOVA Parks staff to investigate what happened. By mid-day, officials from the City's stormwater management and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality were also on-site to assess the situation. By the end of the day, NOVA Parks had a specialized contractor remove the blue substance from the lake that had resulted from the power washing.

- Friday, May 14, 2021
  NOVA Parks staff removed the dead fish from the lake. The second round of removal took place the next morning. NOVA Parks staff also disabled the valve that was used to release the pool water into the lake and sealed the pipe that had led to this accidental discharge. The City reported there were 150 fish and one bird impacted by this incident.

- Tuesday, May 18, 2021
  A follow-up inspection was made by the City's Fire Marshal, Stormwater Management, Transportation and Environmental Services and the Division Chief of Natural Resources with the City's Department of Recreation Parks & Cultural Activities. There was satisfaction that the pump/filter facility had been modified to prevent any future discharges. Various stormwater systems were inspected, and NOVA Parks was instructed to have the stormwater drains optically inspected with remote video to assure that the system is functioning as designed. This work has been scheduled and will be shared with City officials.

This is a deeply regrettable accident. In the accident's immediate aftermath, we worked to be as cooperative and proactive as possible with the various regulatory entities. We had a remediation firm on-site the day we were aware of the accident to clean the blue residue from the splash pad, and we volunteered to remove the dead fish promptly. We took action to make our pool systems incapable of this kind of discharge in the future.

In the days since the incident, we have worked to revise our Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to make sure nothing like this can happen again. NOVA Parks has five waterparks in our region, and to assure that all of our staff are as knowledgeable as possible about our systems, we have region-wide re-training going on with all of our aquatics staff that have access to pump/filter systems. Our goal is to ensure that our systems and procedures are well understood to prevent accidents in the future.

Through this situation, we were in ongoing communications with both City officials and the news media. We are preparing a letter to our neighbors at The Townes at Cameron Parke HOA about what happened and what we are doing to prevent such an accident in the future.

We again thank the City's Fire Marshal and Stormwater Management , Transportation & Environmental Services, and Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities for their quick and diligent response. The City should be proud of the great professionalism and expertise of its staff.

Sincerely,

Paul Gilbert
Executive Director