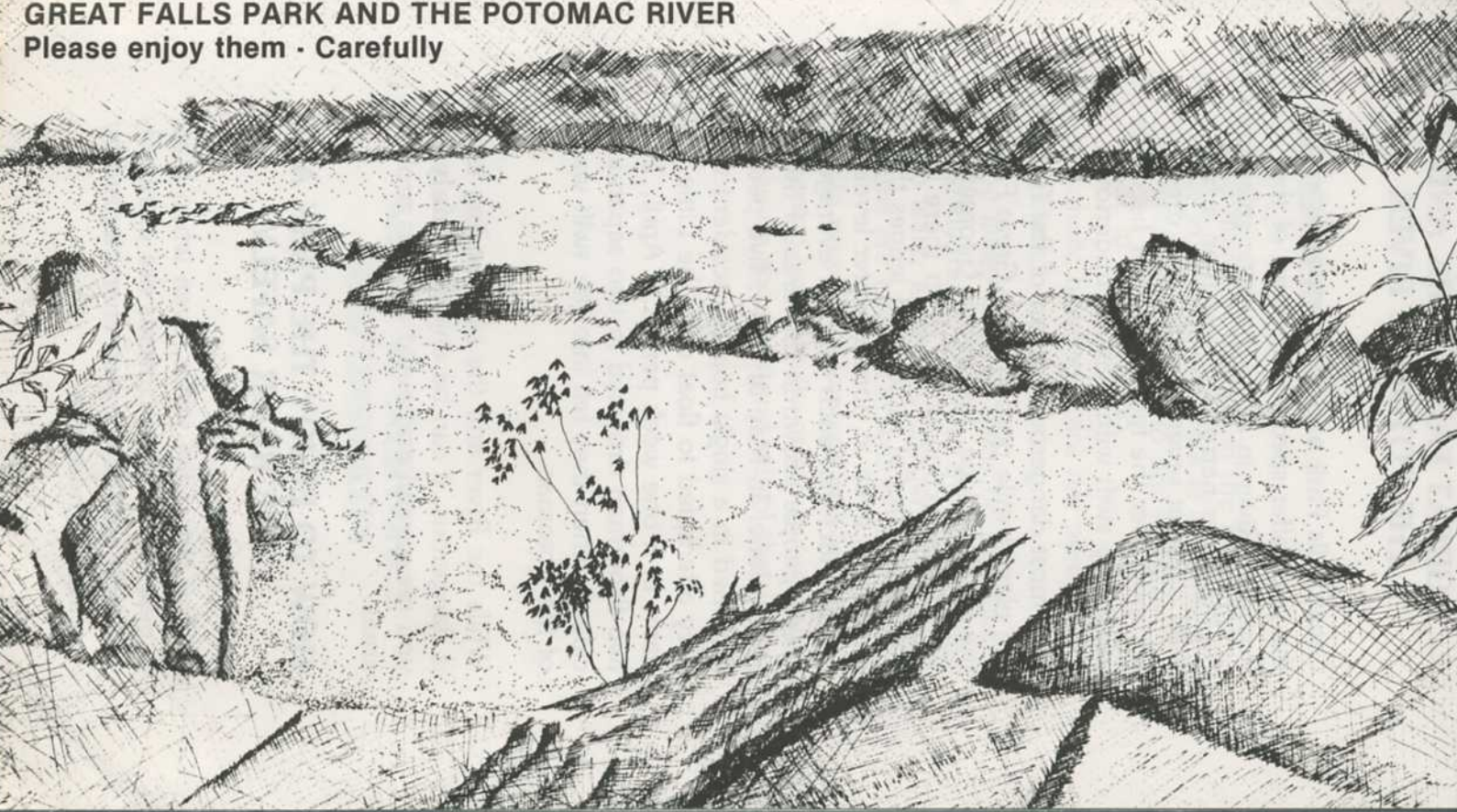


GREAT FALLS PARK AND THE POTOMAC RIVER

Please enjoy them - Carefully



GREAT FALLS PARK AND THE POTOMAC RIVER

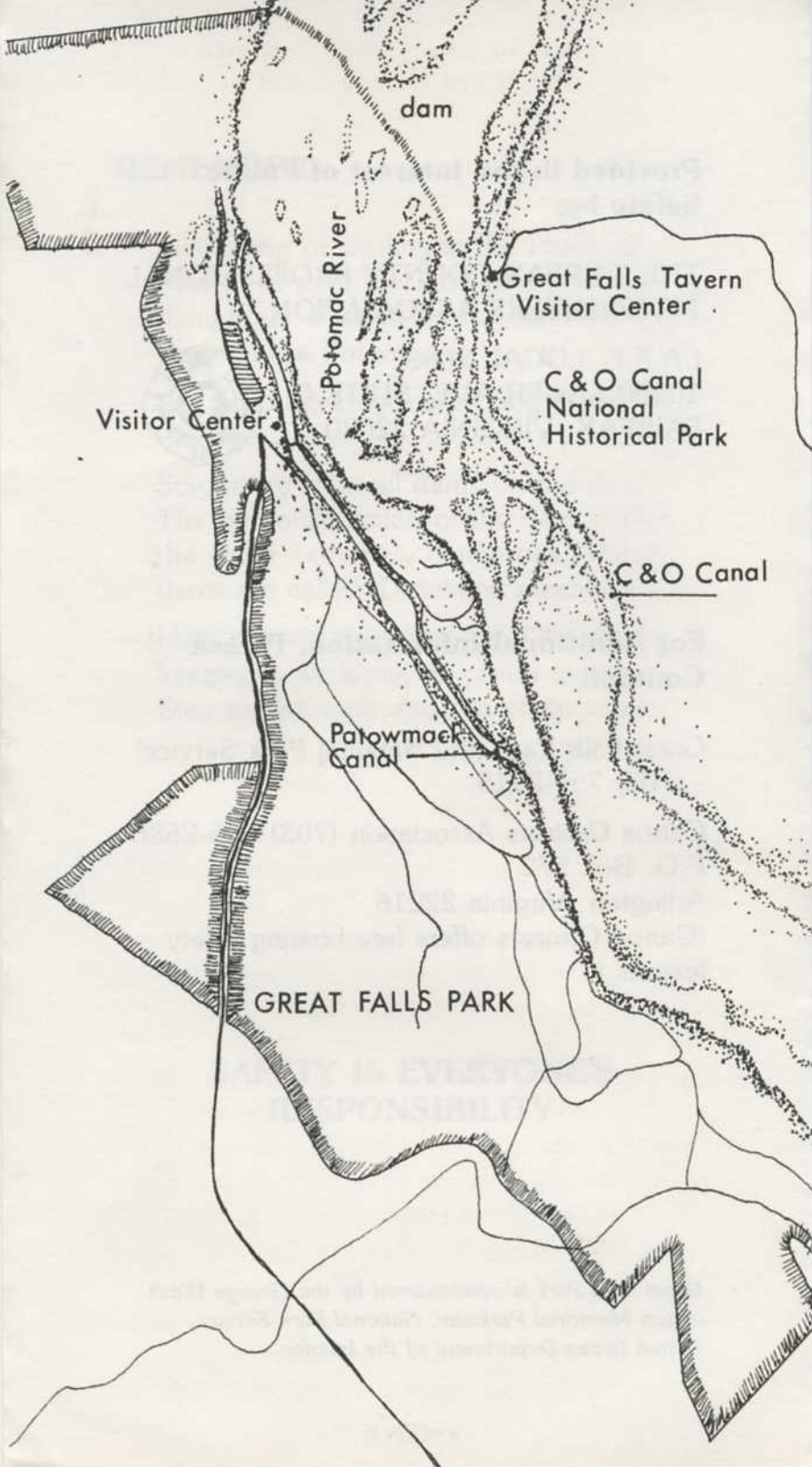
Great Falls Park and the area adjacent to the park offer spectacular views of the Potomac River in all its dramatic splendor. As the River narrows to less than a hundred yards at several points, and drops abruptly over the falls, the water becomes extremely swift with massive undertows.

The most dangerous section of the River is the eleven mile portion from Great Falls to the Chain Bridge, just above Georgetown. Along this section of the River there is a constant series of rapids and ledges that are hazardous even at normal water levels. It is a tragic fact that each year an average of seven people drown in this area of the River alone. In May of 1984, five people drowned in a single boating accident when they attempted to float over the Little Falls dam. In a one week period in April, 1985 two fisherman drowned in two separate accidents when they fell into the swift water of the Potomac.

While the River and the surrounding terrain is dangerous, it can be enjoyed **safely** if you are careful and avoid obvious problem areas.

HOW TO ENJOY THE PARK AND THE RIVER SAFELY

- Stay out of the water, even when it appears safe. River currents are extremely strong and dangerous, characterized by massive undertows.



dam

Potomac River

Great Falls Tavern
Visitor Center

C & O Canal
National
Historical Park

Visitor Center

C & O Canal

Patowmack
Canal

GREAT FALLS PARK

How to Enjoy the Park and the River Safely (cont'd)

- Many of the drownings and accidents have been associated with the use of alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs. Both are strictly prohibited in the park. These laws are rigidly enforced.
- Keep off the rocks at the river's edge. Wet rocks are slippery.
- Fishing in the park is permitted from the shoreline only. When fishing, stay away from where the river currents are strongest.

A BRIEF WORD ABOUT BOATING AND ROCK CLIMBING

Many of the rock formations in the Park, particularly in the Mather Gorge area, offer excellent climbing opportunities. Because of the possibility of serious injury, only experienced climbers with proper equipment should attempt to use this area.

While boating is allowed on the River, all boaters are encouraged to use adequate safety precautions and gain the proper experience level before attempting to use the River in the Great Falls area. All boaters should **absolutely** avoid the dams on the Potomac River. Every boater is required to use a personal flotation device (PFD) while on the river. Boating safety courses are available throughout the Washington area.

REMEMBER:

- Swimming or wading in the Potomac river in or near the Park is extremely dangerous. **Please** do not swim or wade in the Potomac.
- Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the Park.
- Stay away from all dams on the river. The hydraulic action of the dam makes the water extremely dangerous. These dams are called 'Drowning machines'.
- Help prevent drownings and injuries by keeping your family or group together. Stay on the trails and out of the water.

SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

**Provided in the Interest of Public
Safety by:**

THE FAIRFAX COUNTY PROFESSIONAL
FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

I.A.F.F. LOCAL 2068
10500 SAGER AVE. SUITE C
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



**For Additional Information, Please
Contact:**

Great Falls Park (the National Park Service)
- (703) 759-2915.

Canoe Cruisers Association (703) 656-2586
P.O. Box 572
Arlington, Virginia 22216
(Canoe Cruisers offers free boating safety
lessons.)

*Great Falls Park is administered by the George Wash-
ington Memorial Parkway, National Park Service,
United States Department of the Interior.*