



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
THE MARYLAND - NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB Item No. 8

9/25/08

September 17, 2008

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Montgomery County Director of Parks

John Hench, Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division

FROM: Lyn Coleman, Master Planner Supervisor, Park Planning and Stewardship Division

SUBJECT: WORKSESSION: Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Review Public Hearing Testimony and Adopt Plan

BACKGROUND:

The Public Hearing on the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan was held September 11, 2008. The testimony was extremely favorable to the Plan and the concept of an interconnected natural surface trail system and the proposed mountain bike challenge course at the George Carson Farm Special Park. One individual expressed concern about the impact of mountain bikes on the environment and of increased use on the neighborhood.

A summary of public hearing testimony and staff responses may be found in Attachment 1.

Staff will review the testimony with the Planning Board at the worksession.

KEY ISSUE: Access to the Carson Farm from Fieldcrest Road.

The George Carson Farm Special Park (*figure 1*) is proposed as the site of a mountain bike challenge course. The idea has been enthusiastically endorsed by cyclists as seen in the summary of public hearing testimony. The access to the park is via Barcellona Drive, a neighborhood street. The Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan endorses an entry to the park from Fieldcrest Road as the best access option. However, in order to provide a much needed facility for mountain bikes in this portion of the county, the Plan recommends a 15-car parking lot be provided with access from Barcellona Drive until a new access to the park can be provided.

The Planning Board requested an overview of how long it might take to provide a new entrance from Fieldcrest Road.

Staff Response:

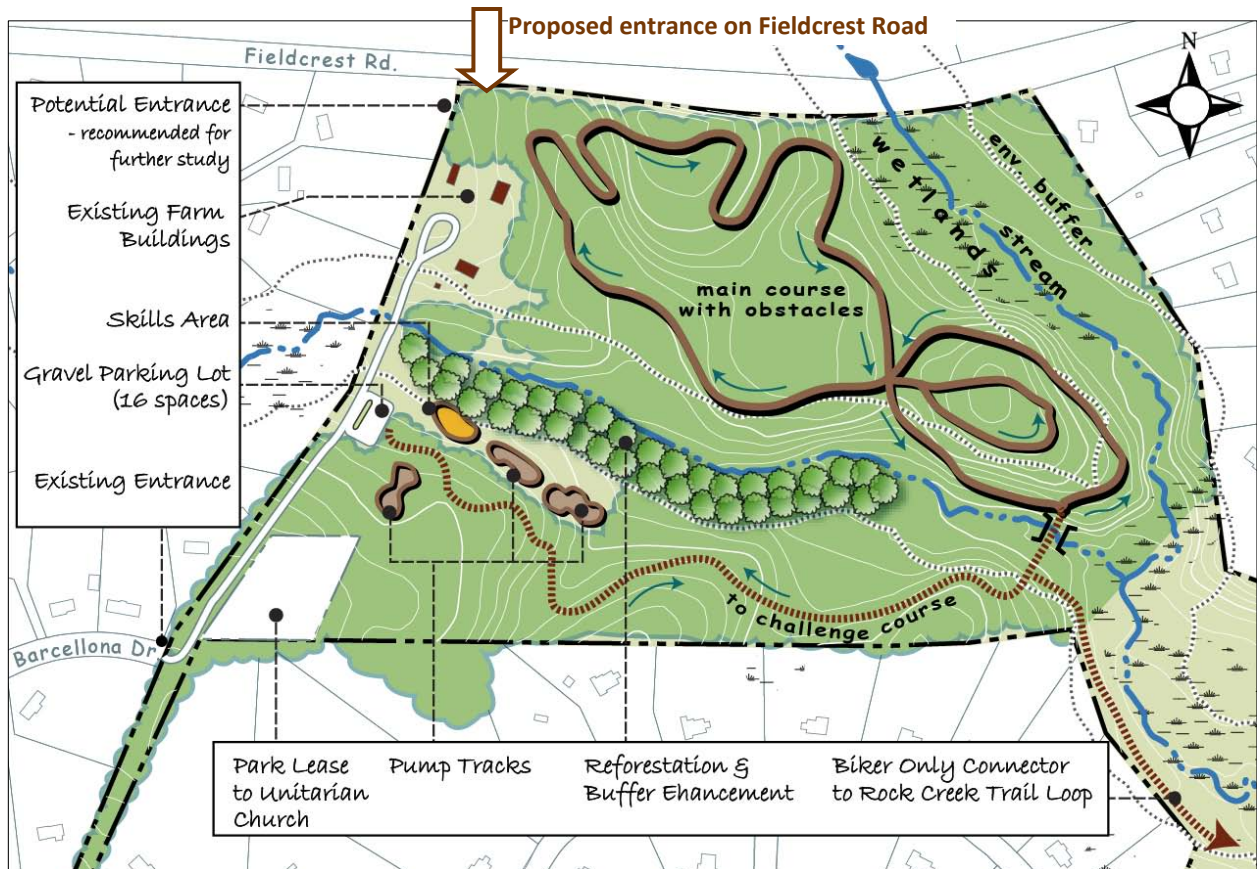
In order to implement the Plan recommendation, Parks Development staff proposes including in Minor New Construction, Non-Local, for FY11 and FY12 the design and construction of a temporary gravel entrance driveway, culvert and parking lot from Fieldcrest Road and a turn-around located immediately inside Park property. Staff is also recommending that completion of a park facility plan be included in the FY 11-16 CIP, including future, permanent paved access road, parking lot and trailhead. As stated in the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan, all improvements to the Carson Farm Special Park will comply with the impervious requirements for the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area.

Providing an access from Fieldcrest Road by FY 12 would coincide with the planned construction of the mountain bike challenge course, proposed to be initiated in FY 11.

This schedule would eliminate the need for a temporary parking area with access from Barcellona Drive.

Another user of the park that would benefit from an access from Fieldcrest Road rather than Barcellona Drive is Second Chance Wildlife Center. Second Chance Wildlife Center is a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organization that serves Montgomery County and surrounding areas. They take in injured or orphaned wildlife and provide treatment/care until the animal can be safely released. Second Chance Wildlife has had a lease with Montgomery Parks to use the facilities at the Carson Farm for over 10 years. There has been discussion for nearly that long that the Center needs a more specialized facility. Several Council Members support the idea of the County providing funds for the design and construction of a new facility. Montgomery Park staff support the use of Carson Farm for this purpose through a long-term lease. Staff will update the Planning Board on the status of the project at the work session.

Figure 1 – George Carson Farm Special Park proposed mountain bike challenge course concept plan



Attachment 1

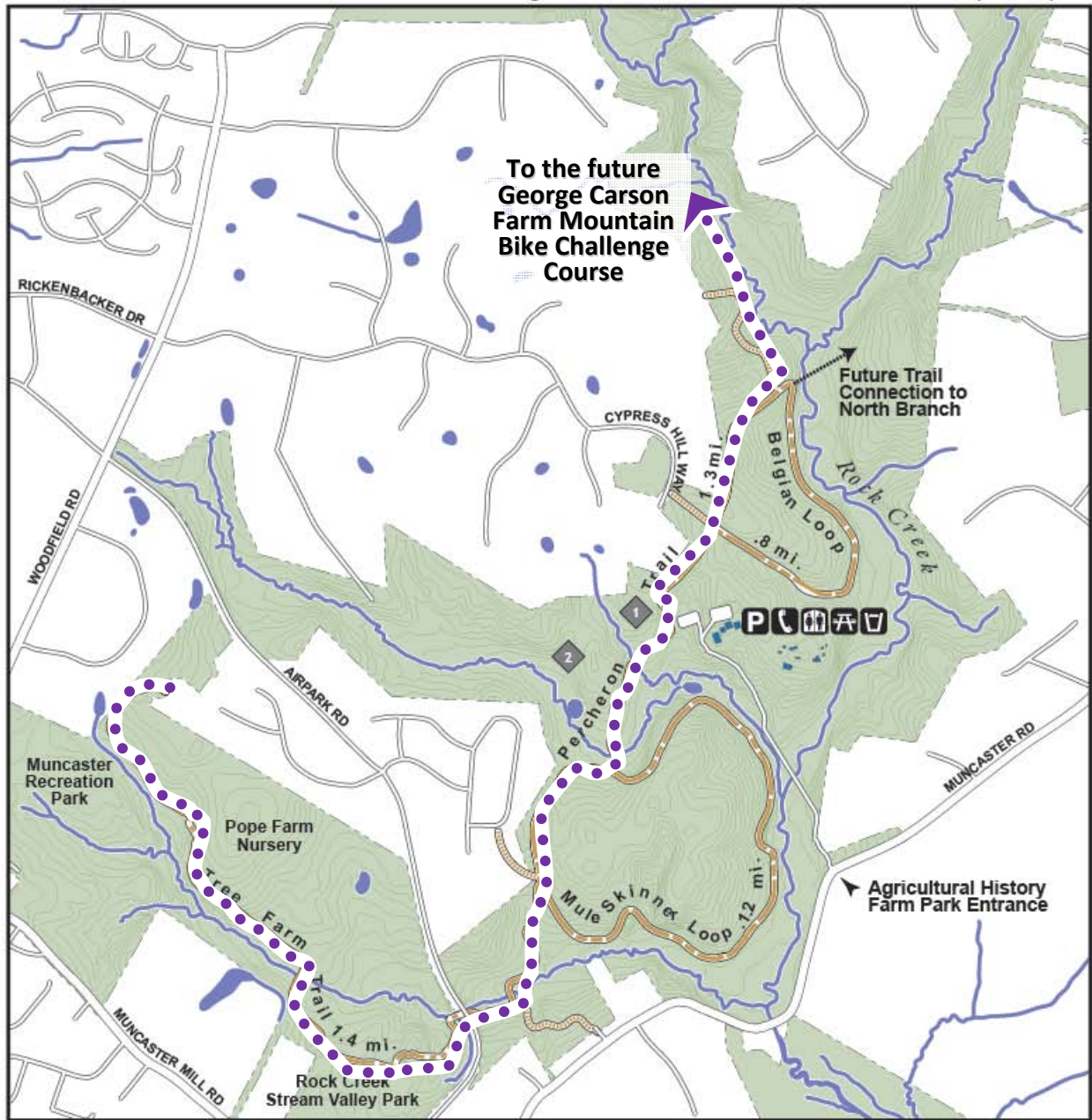
Summary of Public Hearing Testimony

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	THOSE TESTIFYING	STAFF RESPONSE
Support trail proposals and mountain bike proposal	Joe Fritsch (MORE), Patrick Miller, Lynne Oliver, Michael Hall, Michael Lebenkoff, Kevin Maresca, Tom Vaughn, Paul Harrison, Matt Pugh, Joshua Maltby, Silvio Guerrero, Clifford and Hope Hinkesk, Walter Holda	Agree
Support trail proposals for equestrians	Ronald MacNab (TROT)	Agree
Focus on safe road crossings	TROT	Agree. Any road improvement in an area of a trail crossing will be reviewed for opportunities to enhance trail safety.
Identify and mark trail easements for public use	TROT	Mapping public use easements is an extremely time consuming process that involves researching land records that date as far back as 50 years, interpreting record plat locations and easement conditions, and transferring the information to the GIS system. Several years ago, the Planning Department requested funds from the County Council to do this mapping in the Agricultural Reserve as it would be supportive of equestrians and horse farms. The funding request was not approved.
Open Ag History Farm to cyclists	Karl Lehmann	The key component of the trail system at Ag History Farm Park is the north-south section of trail that provides connectivity to the trail loop concept in the Trail Corridor Plan. This is open to cyclists. The internal loop trails focus on equestrians and hikers as more consistent with the mission of the Ag History Farm Park.
Provide natural surface trail connection on Option A between Rock Creek Trail and Lake Frank	Lehmann	This recommendation will be evaluated by the Natural Surface Trails staff in terms of compliance with sustainable trail standards.

Montgomery County Department of Parks - Park Planning and Stewardship

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	THOSE TESTIFYING	STAFF RESPONSE
Use backdoor road to Pope Farm Nursery to gain entrance to Tree Farm Trail	Lehmann	Staff agrees that the Tree Farm Trail can accommodate cyclists.
Cyclists should be restricted to paved roads. Mountain biking accelerates erosion, creates ruts, and damages environment.	Mike Vandeman	In 2004, the department of Parks initiated our sustainable trail program. This program emphasizes natural surface trail design that follows the natural contours of the land, avoids alignments that will result in erosion, identifies alignments in the field to avoid sensitive environmental features and provides supervision of all trail building volunteers by park staff trained in sustainable trail building.

Figure A-1: Proposed trail changes at the Agricultural History Farm Park



Trail Features

Bathrooms & Phones are only available when Agricultural History Farm Park Activity center is open (M-F 8am to 4pm).

- 1 Horse Trailer Parking
- 2 Newmantown Historic Area

	Hiker/Equestrian Trail		Use extreme caution crossing road
	Trail Connector		Steep Slope
	Natural surface trails to be opened to cyclists		Parking
			Bathrooms
			Drinking Water
			Phone
			Picnic Area
			Park Police: 301.949.3010 (Emergency Only)
			SmartParks: 301.670.8080