




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


MCPB  
Item # 7  
4/23/09

**MEMORANDUM**

**Date:** April 10, 2009

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Mary Dolan, Acting Chief, Environmental Planning 

**FROM:** Marco Fuster, Senior Planner, Environmental Planning 

**REVIEW TYPE:** Forest Conservation Plan Review

**APPLYING FOR:** Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) – Proposal for stream restoration project along Northwest Branch

**PLAN NAME:** Upper Northwest Branch

**PLAN NUMBER:** Mandatory Referral #09002 MCDEP-1

**REVIEW BASIS:** This property is subject to the Chapter 22A Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law

**LOCATION:** Located on parkland between the intersection of Norwood and Norbeck Roads and the Northwest Park Golf Course.

**APPLICANT:** Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

**ENGINEER:** Charles P. Johnson and Associates

**HEARING DATE:** April 23, 2009

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval of the preliminary forest conservation plan subject to the following condition:

1. Applicant to rectify and account for all areas of forest clearing associated with project.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The section of Northwest Branch proposed for restoration is located on parkland between the intersection of Norwood and Norbeck Roads and the Northwest Park Golf Course. The project site is adjacent to Blake High School to the southeast, and is contiguous with other Park properties located to the west and south (including the Northwest Park Golf Course). The underlying park partially surrounds an un-built subdivision owned by the State. The entire vicinity is within the watershed of the Northwest Branch, which is a tributary to the Anacostia River. No highly erodible soils occur within the subject park boundary; however most of the project is located within areas of hydric soils and the stream buffer. Construction access is proposed through fallow fields associated with the un-built subdivision. A small portion of the project (approximately 750 square feet) includes stabilization within the adjacent property owned by the Board of Education.



March 2008 Air photo- section of Northwest Branch and vicinity. The Park boundary (outlined in red) contains the section of stream proposed for restoration.



## **BACKGROUND**

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is proposing a stream restoration projects occurring mostly within M-NCPPC parkland along the Northwest Branch. The proposed project, originally identified as priority restoration projects in the *Anacostia River and Tributaries, District of Columbia and Maryland, Northwest Branch Watershed, Montgomery County, Final Ecosystem Restoration Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment* (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2000) and was also conceptually presented to the Planning Board on May 18, 2000, is designed to enhance aquatic and terrestrial habitat in the upper Northwest Branch watershed.

The section of Northwest Branch proposed for restoration is located on parkland between the intersection of Norwood and Norbeck Roads and the Northwest Park Golf Course. The 1,700 foot reach of stream within the project limits presently has high vertical eroding banks and reduced floodplain access. The restoration plan includes structures to stabilize the streambed, enhance in-stream habitat, protect sewer infrastructure, and improve floodplain access. Riparian plantings will expand the forested buffer, provide shade, and enhance wildlife habitat.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES**

The applicant submitted a Natural Resources Inventory/ Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) number 420072080 and received approval on September 17, 2008. The section of the Upper Northwest Branch within the surrounding parkland has a substantially forested buffer. The forested areas are a high priority for retention. There are some areas of steep slopes within the subject parkland; however the slopes are outside of the proposed Limits of Disturbance (except for steep stream banks to be re-graded). The project is not within a Special Protection Area or a Primary Management Area.

## **FOREST CONSERVATION**

This property is subject to the Chapter 22A Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law and a Forest Conservation Plan has been submitted for approval. The work is considered to be a linear project, and therefore the net tract area is based on the project's Limits of Disturbance (unrelated to the size of the underlying properties). The net tract area for the project is approximately 4.7 acres which includes approximately 1 acre of forest clearing. Upon completion of the grading and stabilization, the disturbed areas will be replanted and maintained as forest.

## **TREE SAVE**

There are approximately 44 large or specimen trees identified within the study area. The proposed work includes the removal of 3 trees which measure 24" in diameter or greater. A current County champion tree (a 51" Chestnut Oak in poor condition) is located near the work area and will be retained, along with most of the other the large trees located in the vicinity of the work area. The plans require that an appropriately qualified arborist supervises the work near these trees to ensure that any adverse affects to the trees are minimized. There are a number of

trees of various sizes which are entirely within the Limits of Disturbance (LOD) where slight grading is proposed. Attempts will be made to preserve these trees by coordination in the field between the M-NCPPC Forest Conservation inspector, Parks arborists, tree care professionals, DEP staff, and the contractor. The grading may be modified as needed to protect the trees. However all of the forest within the LOD is technically considered as cleared and therefore must be accounted for even if individual trees are retained. This requirement is tied to the condition of approval for the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the forest conservation plan # MR2009002 MCDEP-1 with the condition noted above.