



Forest Conservation Program Annual Report for FY 2017-2018



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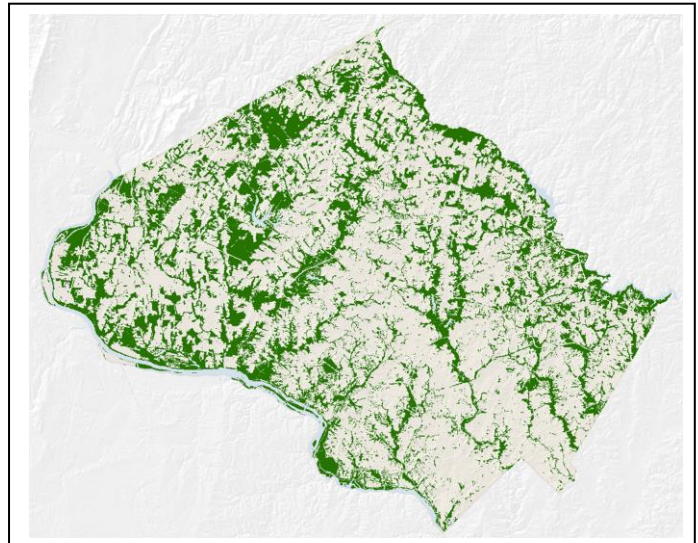
Completed: 10/18/18

Description

FY2017 & FY2018 Forest Conservation Program Annual Report

Review the performance of the forest conservation program

Staff Recommendation: Transmit Data to Maryland Department of Natural Resources



SUMMARY

The State Forest Conservation Law requires all jurisdictions to report to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) each year regarding their efforts to implement and enforce the law. This report includes tables and other data depicting Montgomery County's ongoing implementation of the law, as well as other aspects of the forest conservation program and forest related issues.

Forest Conservation within the Development Process

During the twenty-seven years of the Forest Conservation Program, the Planning Department has reviewed thousands of forest conservation plans covering tens of thousands of acres. This has resulted in the permanent protection of more than 12,000 acres of forest throughout the County. Forest lost to development continues to decline corresponding to a recent sharp decline in the average tract area of development sites.

In fiscal years 2017 and 2018, forest conservation plans accounted for 106.8 acres of forest cleared, 53.3 acres of forest planted and 240 acres of existing forest protected.

Long-term Protection of Forest on Private Land

Three hundred and eight acres of forest were placed in permanent conservation easements on private land in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018. The total easement areas under the jurisdiction of the Planning Department is approximately 12,224 acres. These figures do not include other easement types such as scenic easements or those held by other jurisdictions, such as the City of Rockville, or privately held easements.

Forest Mitigation Banks

Forest mitigation banks are necessary to meet forest requirements that can't be met on a development site. The Planning Department administers this program by approving bank locations and overseeing transactions between developers and forest conservation bank owners. Total bank transactions in the last two fiscal years totaled approximately 67 acres.

Four new forest banks were created in the last two years, 1) Brooke Run, with 3.5 acres of forest; 2) Poplar Run with 46 acres of planted forest, 3) Chandlee Mill with 5.5 acres of forest and 4) Sugarland/Kinzie with 13 acres of forest.

Programs Funded by In-Lieu Fees

Reforestation Program

The forest conservation fund (fee in lieu) is subsidized by developers, who contribute in order to meet forest mitigation requirements when on-site planting is impractical, or mitigation requirements are fractional. The Planning Department continues to work with the Parks Department's, Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan. Where weakened or dying ash trees in county parks have been systematically removed, the Planning Department uses the fee-in-lieu funds to hire contractors to purchase, plant and maintain young trees in areas where significant forest gaps have been created.

The Planning Department continues to work with the Parks Department to use in-lieu fee funds to plant unforested stream valleys in conservation parks. Approximately 33 acres of forest in five different Parks have been planted through this program.

Volunteer Efforts

The Department continues to maintain 33 acres of forest planted since 2008. This work may include invasive vine removal, deer protection placement, and occasional tree planting. The Planning Department hosts about 100 volunteers in five or six work projects per year. The cost is miniscule compared with the cost of hiring contractors to do similar work.

The Wildlife Achievement Chapter of the Izaak Walton League organizes four different volunteer events each year to maintain these newly planted forest areas in Reddy Branch and the Rachel Carson Conservation Parks. Within the last two years we have also partnered with the Montgomery County Conservation Corps and the Multi-Cultural Youth Center to help with on-going maintenance, nearly doubling the volunteer hours to 940 these last two years.

Shades of Green

The forest conservation fund may also be used to meet urban tree canopy goals. This allows use of developer funds to enhance urban canopy cover to improve quality of life, air, and water. Staff has developed the Shades of Green urban planting program, which has expanded to include 22 County central business districts and urban/village centers. An interactive website enables residents to learn about the program, tree care, and to register to receive for free trees. During Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, 38 trees were planted in Bethesda, Wheaton and Silver Spring.

Leaves for Neighborhoods

Leaves for Neighborhoods is a coupon program established in 2010 and funded by in-lieu fees. The coupon discount allows the purchase of trees at a \$40 discount when a qualifying tree is purchased from participating private nurseries in Montgomery County. Seven Montgomery County nurseries participate in the program. Eight hundred sixty-seven coupons were redeemed within the last two years.

Placemaking

The Department has recently begun to explore placemaking tools that can help build community cohesion and enhance neighborhoods' sense of place. There may be potential connections between urban tree planting activities and placemaking that could creatively use funds generated by the fee-in-lieu programs.

CONCLUSION

The Forest Conservation Program Annual Report summarizes the impact of development on the forested lands within Montgomery County. Staff recommends transmitting the report to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

KN:rb

Attachment



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

Montgomery County Forest Conservation Annual Report

All area figures are in acres

| Fiscal Year | Total Review <i>Project Reviews</i> | Exemptions <i>Exemptions and NRIs</i> | Forest Conservation <i>FCPs reviewed</i> | Net Tract Area <i>Net tract area under review</i> | Existing Forest <i>Forest in net tract</i> | Cleared Forest <i>All forest cleared including floodplain</i> | Retained Forest <i>Retained forest</i> | | | Planted Forest <i>All forest planted for all projects</i> | | |
|-------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|---------|--------|--|---------|-------|
| | | | | | | | onsite | offsite | total | onsite | offsite | total |
| 2017 | 239 | 157 | 82 | 489.65 | 138.27 | 46.05 | 93.84 | 34.66 | 128.50 | 22.98 | 10.28 | 33.26 |
| 2018 | 326 | 238 | 88 | 310.00 | 135.76 | 60.79 | 74.33 | 37.02 | 111.35 | 15.54 | 4.54 | 20.08 |

| Fiscal Year | Protection <i>Easement or Public Ownership</i> | Bond Amount <i>Amount of bond posted for projects</i> | In-Lieu Fees | | Implementation <i>Annual dollar cost of the program</i> | Labor Spent <i>Hours devoted to implementation</i> | Forest Mitigation Banks | | | |
|-------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|-------|--|------|
| | | | Collected <i>for fiscal year</i> | Expended <i>for fiscal year</i> | | | Existing forest <i>Created Debited</i> | | Newly planted forest <i>Created Debited</i> | |
| 2017 | 133.7 | \$3,592,816.00 | \$138,653.00 | \$217,068.00 | \$959,737.30 | 17,617.3 | 5.50 | 20.22 | 28.01 | 1.66 |
| 2018 | 174.9 | \$1,034,931.00 | \$306,569.00 | \$285,287.00 | \$1,014,937.43 | 16,763.8 | 16.78 | 40.13 | 36.06 | 5.30 |