



MCPB Item #6
Date: 09 / 14 / 2023

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 7, 2023

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
Michael F. Riley

VIA: Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks
Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director, Administration *mf*
Andrew Frank, Division Chief, Park Development Division (PDD) *af*

FROM: Brenda Sandberg, Real Estate Management Supervisor, PDD *bs*
Cassandra Michaud, Cultural Resources Stewardship, PPSD

SUBJECT: Land Acquisition Recommendation: Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park
Reddemeade Farm Partnership
1701 Ednor Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905
32.87 acres, more or less, improved

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests the following action by the Montgomery County Planning Board:

Approve MCPB Resolution No. 23-093 for the acquisition of the Reddemeade Farm Partnership property to create the Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park for a negotiated purchase price of \$2,000,000 to be funded with County G.O. Bonds appropriated to the Legacy Open Space PDF.

A draft of Resolution #23 – 093 is attached.

SUMMARY

This proposed acquisition will create a new park to interpret the Indigenous history of Montgomery County. The Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park will provide for conservation, research, and interpretation of significant cultural resources and will serve to address an educational programming gap in Montgomery Parks cultural resources outreach. The new park will provide stewardship of an Indigenous soapstone quarry – a rare resource within the state – and hands-on educational activities focused on daily life in Montgomery County over the last 5,000 years. In addition to interpretive amenities and activities, the new park will provide a natural surface loop trail connecting the activity areas within the park, as well as providing opportunities for potential future connections to the stream valley within this park and to adjoining parks.

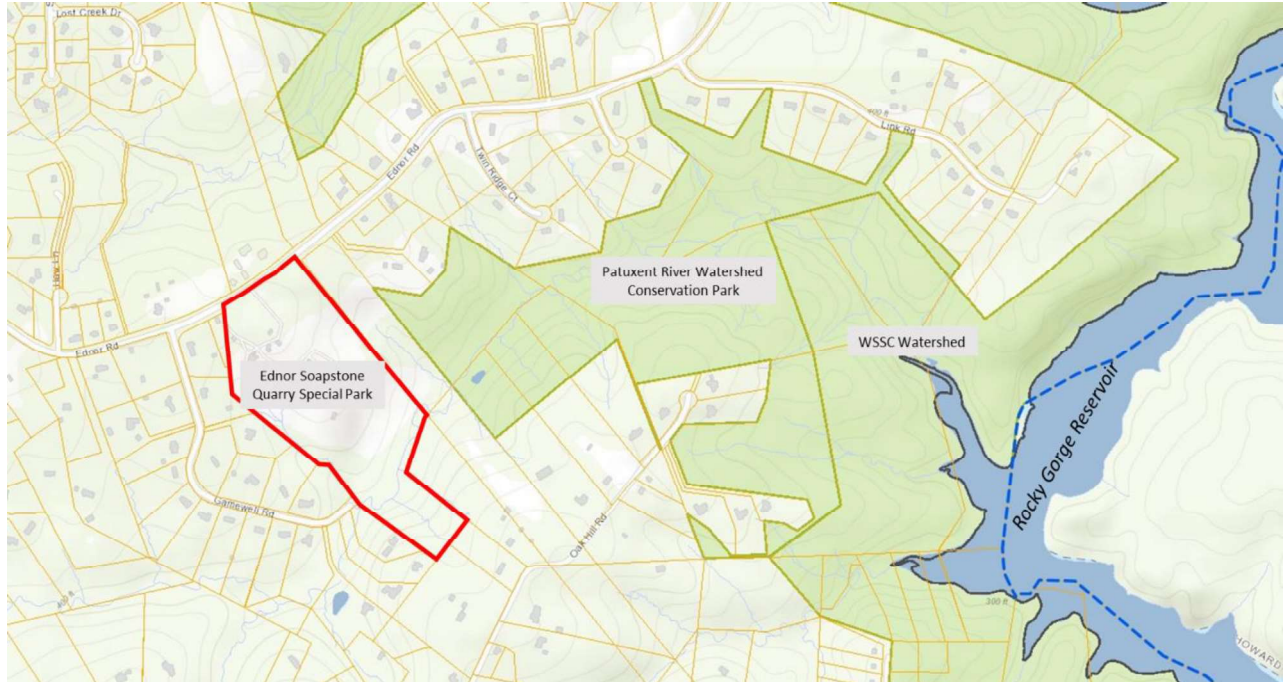


Figure 1: Vicinity Map, future Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The subject property, zoned Rural Cluster (RC), consists of 32.87 acres of land, more or less, improved with several structures to support the current use as an equestrian facility including three horse barns, an indoor riding ring, a farmhouse, and other assorted structures. The property address is 1701 Ednor Road and is legally described as Parcel P480 in “Snowdens Manor” in Silver Spring, Maryland. The owner is a willing seller, and the property is being acquired through negotiation in fee simple.

In addition to in-fee ownership of P480, this purchase will give the Commission limited rights over the adjacent 7.73-acre parcel (P422) that was sold by the former owners to PEPCO in 1957. The owners of P480 retained the rights for agricultural use and road access across P422 as long as no structures are built, trees planted, or other interference occurs with PEPCO’s electrical infrastructure. During the tenure of Reddemeade Equestrian Farm, the PEPCO parcel has been used as fenced horse pasture. This transfer of rights to the Commission, as the new owners of P480, will give Parks the right to cross the PEPCO property to reach the Patuxent River Watershed Conservation Park, providing for park maintenance access and the potential for new trails into existing parkland.



Figure 2: Small stable and large stable/indoor riding ring, Reddemeade Farm



Figure 3: Reddemeade Farm Property, PEPCO Parcel, and part of Patuxent River Watershed Conservation Park

EDNOR SOAPSTONE QUARRY SIGNIFICANCE

The property contains a known archaeological site, recorded in Maryland Historical Trust's GIS system MEDUSA as site 18MO11 - the Ednor Soapstone Quarry (also known as the Lethbridge/Thompson Quarry). Originally identified in 1897 by Smithsonian archaeologist William Henry Holmes, the quarry is one of a string that were once present in this part of the County. Soapstone, also called steatite, is a metamorphic rock that is only present in limited areas of the State, in veins running roughly parallel to the Fall Line, a geologic boundary between the Piedmont and Coastal Plain physiographic regions. It is soft enough to be easily modified and dense enough to withstand and retain high heat, making it a highly valuable raw material for Indigenous communities to use on a daily basis, most often as cooking vessels but also formed into smoking pipes, tools, and personal artifacts. A search of the Maryland Historical Trust's MEDUSA system shows there are 11 recorded soapstone quarry sites in Montgomery County. Of these, six have been destroyed by development, three are on WSSC property but inaccessible or flooded by T. Howard Duckett Reservoir, and one is a historic-period quarry, making the Ednor site the only one available for research and public interpretation related to Indigenous use of the resource.

Soapstone was primarily used during the Late Archaic period of Maryland's history (6000 BP [Before Present] – 3250 BP) and into the Early Woodland Period (3250 BP – 2000 BP). A notable cultural transition takes place around this time from the more mobile Late Archaic lifeways where groups moved locations seasonally to an

increasingly sedentary one with a focus on domesticated crops. Another significant change that marks the Woodland Period is the development of clay pottery for vessels, replacing the steatite bowls that were formerly used. The first clay vessels contained ground steatite as temper to strengthen their forms, signaling a continuation of the raw material's importance into the Early Woodland. As a valuable resource that was only located within some geographic areas, these quarries became important destinations for groups living outside the region to obtain steatite to bring to their settlements or to trade with those who had access.



Figure 4: Ednor soapstone bowl fragments (MAC Lab, JPPM); outcroppings at Ednor Soapstone Quarry

Site 18MO11 has been studied by various archaeologists since Holmes originally identified its location in the late 19th century, and each has concluded that the site holds the potential to significantly improve our understanding of the daily life, trade, and technology of groups living during this transitional time in the County's history.



Figure 5: Forest over quarry site; Horse pastures over proposed park and PEPCO parcels

MASTER PLAN DESIGNATIONS

Two master plans have made recommendations regarding preservation of this site over the past 26 years.

Cloverly Master Plan, 1997

The Cloverly Master Plan recommended acquisition of the Ednor Soapstone Quarry, referred to as the Thompson/Lethbridge Soapstone Quarry, as one of the few soapstone quarries in Maryland that has not been destroyed by commercial quarrying (p. 70). This Master Plan recommended adding this site to the Parks system to provide public protection of this important archaeological resource, mentioning that recent damage to the resource had occurred from private activities.

Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan, 2001

The Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan (LOS FMP) was approved by the County Council in 2001 to protect the “best of the best” open spaces in Montgomery County using a variety of tools including acquisition into the Parks system. The LOS FMP developed criteria for six different types of open space and designated specific sites within each category as LOS resources deserving of protection. The addition of the Ednor Soapstone Quarry to the park system meets the goals and criteria for two open space categories within the LOS FMP. First, preservation of a significant archaeological site, and provision of adequate open space for public education about the County’s indigenous heritage, places this site in the Conservation of Heritage Resources resource category.

Second, adding this property to the park system meets the LOS Water Supply Protection criteria. The LOS FMP recommends protecting large Rural Cluster-zoned parcels in certain subwatersheds near the Rocky Gorge Reservoir as a means to protect the region’s drinking water supply for the long term. The Ednor Branch watershed is specifically listed as a target watershed, and the proposed Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park drains directly to this tributary and includes over 1,000 linear feet of Ednor Branch. Removing the potential for land-disturbing development with increased impervious surfaces while creating the opportunity to reforest and stabilize eroding stream valleys and drainage channels on this parcel, directly upstream of existing Patuxent River Watershed Conservation Parkland, fits the exact description of priority Water Supply Protection parcels in the LOS plan.

PARK CONCEPT AND PUBLIC BENEFITS

Public ownership of this property will provide a unique opportunity to achieve Parks’ goals of stewarding water resources, publicly interpreting important cultural resources, and providing public access to the natural environment. Park management of this property will ensure responsible stewardship of this unique, non-renewable resource while also providing a place for future public interpretation and education of this rare archaeological site type.

Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park will meet two primary cultural resource goals: 1) stewardship of the Ednor Soapstone Quarry, and 2) public interpretation and hands-on educational activities to celebrate and widely share the history of the Indigenous groups who called this area home. Activities will be geared towards the K-12 audience and align with the Maryland state educational standards. The initial park concept plan includes a bus loop to accommodate school field trips. Activities that could be interpreted at the park include food preparation and cooking demonstrations, construction of Indigenous homes and shelters, flintknapping (stone tool making), and mat weaving, among many others. The future Park will incorporate and honor the Indigenous perspective in interpretive form and content.

In addition to heritage conservation and interpretation, this park will provide public access to open space and resource-based recreation. Natural surface trails linking the interpretative locations with natural areas on the property will provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. Future trail connections across the PEPCO parcel into the Patuxent River Watershed Conservation Park may provide expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation.



Figure 6: Concept Plan for future park improvements, Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park

START UP COSTS & OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (OBI)

Start-up costs to convert this property into Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park will cover demolition of some existing structures, site cleanup, and limited park improvements needed to create a safe and functional interim condition park. Important projects in this early phase also will include natural and cultural resource tasks such as archaeological surveys, non-native invasive plant (NNI) control, and similar projects. Other start up projects may include building a parking lot with ADA spaces, creation of interpretive materials and signage, and afforestation to buffer sensitive areas and adjacent undeveloped slopes. The total costs of these start up projects are estimated to range between \$300,000 and \$400,000 based on site conditions. Funding for these site improvements currently exists within the Legacy Open Space PDF; post-acquisition clean-up activities are expected to begin in FY24.

After site cleanup work is completed, the first phase of this interpretive park will require staffing and contract funding to conduct critical archaeological research and initiate the interpretive program. Operating Budget Impact (OBI) will be requested to cover 0.5 work years plus funds for contracted work such as archaeological studies and production of interpretive materials. An estimated annual OBI of \$80,000 starting in FY25 would provide the needed resources for the initial phase of this significant cultural park.

In addition to research and interpretive preparation, regular park maintenance and operations tasks such as natural resource management, park inspections, regular mowing of turf areas, and other standard maintenance work will be necessary during this first phase. These tasks are estimated to have an OBI of about \$20,000 per year, resulting in a total estimated OBI of approximately \$100,000.

Future phases to create a more robust interpretive park with active interpretive programming will be planned, designed, and funded through future CIP and operating budget processes, including requested staffing level of two work years.

CONCLUSION

Acquisition of this property will provide a significant benefit to the public by creating an interpretive park that both protects a rare cultural resource and delivers high-quality educational experiences for a time period that is not yet adequately addressed within the park system, thus assisting the Parks Department in providing public facilities to address critical equity issues across the County.

CC: Gary Burnett
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Megan Chung

MCPB No. 23-093
Acquisition of the Reddemeade Farm PTR property to create the Ednor Soapstone Quarry Special Park

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“**Commission**”) is authorized by Md. Code Ann., Land Use, §17-101 (formerly Article 28, Section 5-101), to acquire, develop, maintain and operate a public park system within the Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District; and

WHEREAS, the Commission identifies properties that are eligible for acquisition and recommends that Montgomery County (the “**County**”) acquire such properties to be administered by the Commission under the purview of that Agreement made by the Commission and County dated May 24, 1972; and

WHEREAS, Reddemeade Farm PTR, an unincorporated Maryland general partnership, owns certain property identified by Tax Account #05-02416304, containing 32.87 acres, more or less, improved (the “**Property**”), located at 1701 Ednor Road, Silver Spring Maryland 20905, and which property meets parkland acquisition criteria, for the purpose of creating a new cultural resources interpretive park to serve Montgomery County; and

WHEREAS, acquisition is consistent with the recommendations in the 2001 Approved and Adopted Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board on behalf of the Commission recommends that the County acquire the Reddemeade Property from Reddemeade Farm PTR all as described above; and

WHEREAS, there are sufficient monies available in the County’s FY24 Legacy Open Space Program CIP to pay for the acquisition of the Property.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Montgomery County Planning Board recommends that the County execute the Purchase and Sale Contract, on such terms acceptable to the Commission, to acquire the Property from Reddemeade Farm PTR for the purchase price of Two-Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) and other valuable consideration for the purpose of creating a new cultural interpretive park in Montgomery County.

* * * * *

This is to certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner _____, seconded by Commissioner _____, with Commissioners _____ voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, September 14th, 2023 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Artie Harris, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

M-NCPPC Legal Department

Date: _____