

EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES AND RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAMS

This chapter addresses existing recreation facilities, including those operated by the M-NCPPC Enterprise Division and the Montgomery County Recreation Department. Also discussed is natural and cultural resource protection, and agricultural preservation programs at the state and local levels.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Recreation programs provide several key values and benefits for individuals, families, and the community, including creating critical community focal points, offering activities that strengthen the family unit, promoting health and wellness, reducing isolation and facilitating social and cultural interaction, providing positive alternatives to drug and alcohol use, enhancing public safety, and promoting economic growth and vitality.

The recreation programs also provide accessible leisure, educational, and personal skill development activities for individuals with disabilities through mainstreaming and adaptive programs, and provide programs for the families of participants. The activities available to residents with disabilities are often the only opportunities these residents have for leisure activities. There are few private sector alternatives.

The Recreation Department is responsible for operating large recreation centers, as well as

indoor and outdoor pools. Many of the wide variety of programs offered and facilities operated by the Montgomery County Recreation Department are located in M-NCPPC parks while others are located on County owned property. Areas of the County where future community centers and pools are planned can be found in Chapter 6.

Recreation Center Facilities

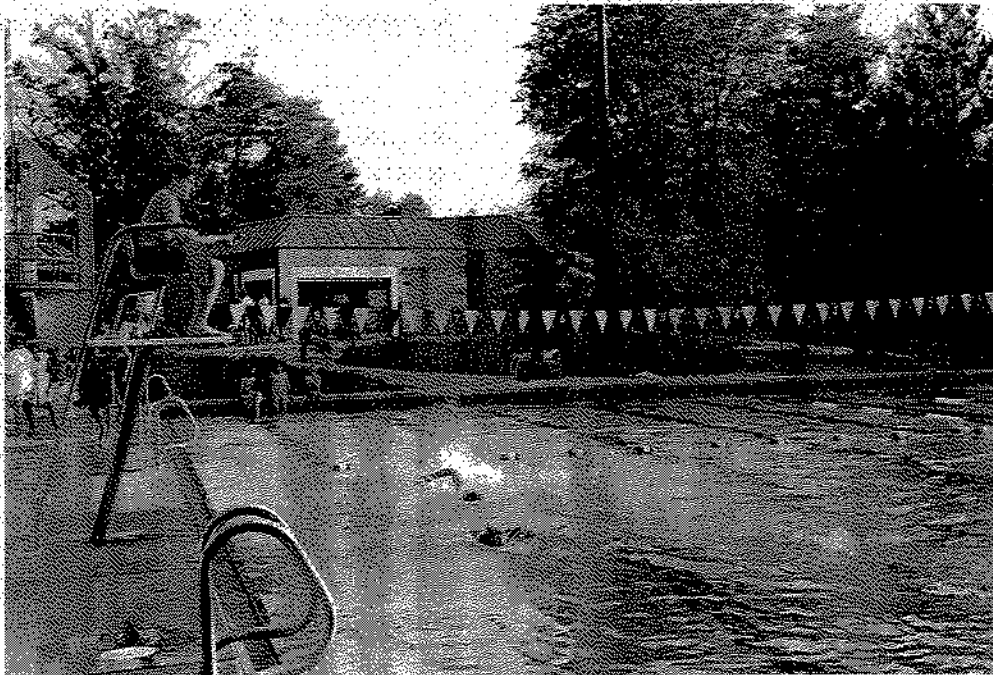
Many Recreation Department programs are currently provided in small, Commission-owned centers located primarily in local parks. In the 1950s and 1960s, M-NCPPC built many one-room recreation buildings that ranged in size from 900 to 1,800 square feet and included one large room, two restrooms, and a small kitchen space with a refrigerator and a range. These facilities now serve as space for daycare programs, community meetings, limited recreation classes, and support activities held at park ballfields or picnic areas. While they still provide vital services, the size of community centers has increased over the years to improve efficiency and better serve the needs of the community.

The Recreation Department began constructing larger recreation centers in the 1960s. As described in Chapter 6, the current prototype for these facilities meets residents' needs much more effectively. The Department currently has 16 community recreation centers located throughout the County which host programs for the Department as well as other County agencies and community organizations. Community recreation centers provide leisure activity, social interaction, family participation, and neighborhood civic involvement, and promote community cohesion and identity. Programs for all ages are available in community recreation centers. These facilities are designed to support sports, fitness, dance, social activities, and arts programs. Activities include instructional programs, organized competitions, performances and exhibitions, recreational clubs and hobby groups, access initiatives for special populations, and summer camps. In addition, they offer important community meeting space. Center spaces are available for party rentals, receptions, and meetings. User fees are charged for room rentals and special programs and services offered at each facility.

Aquatic Facilities

Public outdoor pools provide opportunities during the summer months for thousands of citizens to swim, compete, and learn lifetime swim skills. The pools serve swimming needs for area daycare groups, summer playground programs, summer camps, and the disabled. They are particularly important to serve those who have no access to private pools. The aquatics program provides recreational, fitness, instructional, competitive, therapeutic and rehabilitative water activities that serve all citizens.

The first public pool opened in Montgomery County in 1968. The Department of Recreation now operates six outdoor and four indoor pools. The outdoor pools operate seven days a week from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The indoor pools operate seventeen hours a day, approximately 340 days a year. In addition, there are two municipalities with indoor and outdoor pools, and three YMCA pools in the County. This supply of pools is augmented by private swim clubs and apartment pools. In the 1980s and '90s, the Recreation Department developed



Upper County Outdoor Pool

modern designs for multi functional swimming facilities that serve significant regions of the County with features and programs that attract regular and occasional users.

Public indoor pools provide the opportunity for lap swimming, water aerobics classes, and physical rehabilitation opportunities that are in great demand year-round. Swim team members (youth and adults) who wish to continue training during winter months, and families looking for indoor, healthful recreation opportunities use public or private indoor pools. The public school system also uses Recreation Department pools to conduct high school varsity swim and dive programs.

Recreation Department Programs

The Montgomery County Department of Recreation offers a wide variety of recreation programs to serve all age groups of County residents. The mission of the Department is to provide and maintain quality programs and facilities that meet the recreational, social, cultural, and physical needs of a diverse and changing community. The following section briefly describes the various types of programs offered by the Recreation Department in 1997.

Camps and Playgrounds

The camps and playgrounds program is designed to meet the needs of youths, ages 5-12, during the summer and winter holiday breaks. Teenagers 13-18 participate in programs and services designed specifically to meet their needs. A large population of youth, some of whom are latch-key children, are served by playgrounds, super summer centers, Fill-in-the-Gap (FIG) programs, and day camps. Winter camps are also provided at community centers during the holiday breaks to serve children in kindergarten through third grade. Kids Day Out is a program designed to assist parents and employees on

isolated school holidays when children are out of school, but parents must work. Parents drop off their children on the way to work at one of five locations around the County for a full day of activities.

Classes

Recreational and skill development classes are offered to adults and youths. Leisure classes are scheduled and advertised four times each year in the major categories of arts, crafts, exercise, music, performing and social dance, and special interest areas. Physical activity classes are offered in the martial arts, in-line skating, golf, tennis, volleyball, gymnastics, fencing, and racquet ball. Special intensive schools and clinics are also offered during school vacation times. Recreation, social, and early childhood development activities are also offered for children ages 1 to 5 years, incorporating child-parent interaction, creativity, independence, fitness, and wholesome fun. The preschool activities consist of Tiny Tot classes which are established by age groups and subject matter. After-school classes and programs are also offered for elementary and middle school students throughout the County.

Senior Adults

The senior adult program offers services for adults age 55 and above such as clubs, classes, sports, trips, and special programs for the frail and isolated. There are also senior centers and senior clubs. The senior centers are open three to six days per week and provide social, physical, recreational, educational, and community-oriented activities. Recreation opportunities range from organized classes such as fitness, art, and computer skills to more informal activities such as billiards, discussion groups, and guest speakers. These centers are focal points for delivering a variety of recreation, community, and health services to senior adults. The senior citizen clubs are groups of 20-70 individuals, who meet in recreation centers near their homes one or two days each week. The clubs offer special

interest classes, trips, social activities, and food services at selected sites.

Special Events

County-wide special events include the Ethnic Festival, First Night, Oktoberfest, and many others which offer a variety of benefits such as enhancing a sense of community, encouraging family participation, and providing a positive image for the County. Special events offer opportunities for interaction among the various segments of the County's multi-cultural community and provide a chance to celebrate its rich cultural diversity.

Sports

The sports program administers and delivers an extensive program in youth and adult sports throughout the County. Programs include instructional sports for K-2nd grade youth in soccer, basketball, T-ball; competitive leagues for grades 3-12 in basketball, baseball, softball, flag football and in-line hockey. Leagues are also offered for grades 6-8 in basketball and grades 3-12 in tackle football and baseball (Montgomery County Baseball Association).

For adults, competitive leagues are offered seasonally in tennis, soccer, flag and touch football, volleyball, basketball and softball. Tournaments and instructional clinics complement the league offerings for all age groups. Benefits include building self esteem, building strong bodies, and reducing stress. Additionally, in response to the increasing popularity of roller hockey among youth, the Recreation Department has instituted an instructional program in this sport.

Teen Adventure and Therapeutic Recreation

Teen programs provide positive social alternatives to alcohol and drug use. Teen Clubs serve middle and high school aged youth by sponsoring events on holidays and weekends such as dances, activity nights and trips. Teen

Centers, jointly operated by the Department, the private sector, and community/civic organizations, provide after school and weekend drop-in facilities or special activities for youths, ages 13 to 18. 'Drawing the Line' and 'Under 21' programs are specifically designed to combat underage alcohol use with activities such as parties after football and basketball games and after prom events. Some programs are in partnership with private sector establishments. 'After Hours' is a program to provide special events strictly for the middle school students from October to April. High adventure activities are provided to the general public, and especially targeted to at-risk youth. In these activities, youth are exposed to caving, rock climbing, wind surfing, canoeing, back packing, biking, skiing, and camping programs.

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Park Enterprise Facilities And Programs

M-NCPPC sponsors many recreation programs through the Enterprise Division. The Park Enterprise Fund was established to account for the operation and maintenance of various facilities and services which are entirely or primarily supported by user fees. These facilities provided more than 1.3 million recreational uses in FY 97 with no impact on the tax-supported Park Fund Operating Budget. Currently there are over 30 revenue-generating enterprise facilities/operations.

Golf Courses

This program includes the operation of Northwest, Needwood, Little Bennett, and Sligo

Creek Golf Courses. Northwest is a challenging 27-hole course. Needwood offers an Executive Nine in addition to the regulation 18-hole course. Little Bennett is the newest 18-hole course. Sligo is a 9-hole course that is particularly popular with seniors, juniors, and beginners. Needwood, Northwest, Little Bennett, and Sligo Golf Courses offer pro-shops, riding carts, equipment rentals, and snack bars. Northwest, Needwood, and Little Bennett offer driving ranges and lessons. Additionally, during 1997, the M-NCPPC began operating the 9-hole golf course at the former Naval Surface Warfare Center in White Oak on a temporary basis. It is hoped that a long term arrangement can be negotiated to ensure that this course remains available to County residents.

Ice Rinks

Wheaton and Cabin John Ice Rinks are popular park facilities. Both ice rinks accommodate hockey and figure skating

programs and provide group and private lessons, general and special sessions, therapeutic skating, skate rentals, facility leasing, and snack bars. Cabin John Ice Rink also offers a studio rink and a pro-shop. Cabin John Ice Rink is enclosed and operates seven days a week, eleven months a year. Wheaton is a covered outdoor rink which operates seven days a week from late October through March.

Construction on a new, enclosed Wheaton Ice Rink is scheduled to begin next year. When the new ice rink is opened for business, the existing facility will be used for in-line (rollerblade) skating. Renovation and improvements to the Cabin John Ice Rink, to include the addition of a second full sheet of ice, are scheduled to begin in 1999. There is also the potential for a major new two-sheet ice rink at Ridge Road Recreational Park, which would provide an ice skating facility for the upper County area.



Sligo Creek Public Golf Course

EXISTING MONTGOMERY COUNTY ENTERPRISE FACILITIES

ICE RINKS

Wheaton Ice Rink and Snack Bar
Cabin John Ice Rink and Snack Bar

GOLF COURSES

Sligo Golf Course
Northwest Golf Course
Needwood Golf Course
Little Bennett Golf Course
White Oak Golf Course

CONFERENCE CENTERS

Woodlawn
Rockwood Manor
Lodge at Little Seneca Creek
Waters House

INDOOR TENNIS CENTERS

Cabin John Indoor Tennis
Wheaton Indoor Tennis

PARK FACILITIES

Northern Region

Black Hill Boats
Little Bennett Campsites
Lake Needwood Boats and Snack Bar

Agricultural History Activities Building
Black Hill Visitors Center*
Meadowside Nature Center*

Southern Region

Cabin John Train and Snack Bar
Wheaton Picnic Snack Bar
Wheaton Train
Wheaton Carousel
Brookside Nature Center*
Locust Grove Nature Center*
Brookside & McCrillis Gardens*

CONCESSIONS

Wheaton Stable
Meadowbrook Stable
Potomac Horse Center

* - Park Fund operations w/revenue producing programs accounted for in the Enterprise Fund.

Figure 5.1

Source: M-NCPPC Enterprise Division, 2/23/98

Social/Conference Centers

Rockwood Manor, Woodlawn Conference Center, and the Waters House have been preserved and restored as conference center resources for residents of Montgomery County. The much newer Lodge at Little Seneca Creek rounds out this complement of rental facilities managed and operated by the Commission.

Armory Place, located in the downtown Silver Spring area, began operating in 1981 and has served a variety of groups and organizations as well as individual clients. In 1998, the Armory will close to make way for the re-development of Silver Spring.

Rockwood is a special park comprised of the Manor House, Skyview Lodge, and French

House which offer conference rooms of various sizes and overnight accommodations on a fee/reservation basis. These facilities are suitable for weddings, parties, receptions and other social gatherings as well as business conferences and retreats. The park also has three dormitory buildings which are particularly well-suited for youth groups.

Woodlawn Conference Center opened in 1985. This Manor House is located on lovely grounds with trees, a stone barn, and a gazebo. The manor and grounds are available to individuals or groups and are particularly well-suited for weddings and receptions.

The Lodge at Little Seneca Creek opened in 1991. This lodge, located in upper Montgomery County near Germantown, is suitable for weddings, receptions, and parties as well as meetings and retreats for small groups.

The historic Waters House was renovated and deeded to the Commission in 1997, and should be available to the public for limited use next year.

Indoor Tennis

The Commission operates two indoor tennis facilities: Cabin John and Wheaton. The Wheaton Indoor Tennis Facility has six courts and is covered by a rigid shell structure with canvas-covered portals that can be opened to provide ventilation and a view of the outdoors in mild weather. Restrooms, showers, lockers, a seating area, and office are contained in an attached service building. Cabin John Indoor Tennis is a six-court facility housed in a permanent building with a central service core that contains restrooms, showers, lockers, pro shop, a large customer lounge, and staff offices. Both offer seasonal court reservations, spot time play, facility rental, and group or private lessons.

Other Revenue Producing Park Facilities

A number of other revenue producing facilities, both park-operated and concessionaire-operated, are included in the park system. In the northern part of the County, these facilities include the Lake Needwood Boating Facility, revenue producing programs at Black Hill Visitor's Center and Meadowside Nature Center, the Campgrounds at Little Bennett, and the Activities Building at the Agricultural History Farm Park. In the southern portion of the County, these facilities include the Cabin John and Wheaton Miniature Trains, the Cabin John Train Snack Bar, Wheaton Carousel, the Wheaton Picnic Area Snack Bar, revenue-producing programs at the Locust Grove and Brookside Nature Centers, and fee based activities (tours, facility rentals, educational programs) at Brookside and McCrillis Gardens. Revenue-producing facilities operated by concessionaires include the Potomac, Wheaton, and Meadowbrook Equestrian Centers.

Natural Resource Programs and Plans

The natural environment of Montgomery County, its soils, streams, rivers, wetlands, and woodlands, support a variety of plants and animals. This environment contributes to the County's high quality of life, visual quality and character. Due to its proximity to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Montgomery County is expected to continue developing at a fairly rapid pace. The critical concern is how to protect the County's air, water, land, and wildlife resources while managing growth and making development more environmentally sensitive.

Environmental issues are given much greater weight now more than ever when park planning decisions are made. Park plans consider a variety of environmental factors including soil type,

hydrology, drainage, slope, non-tidal wetlands, stream and wetland buffers, rare, threatened and endangered species, forest interior birds, minimal viable population size, exotic plants, edge effect, natural community type, stormwater management, tree preservation, restoration, and mitigation.

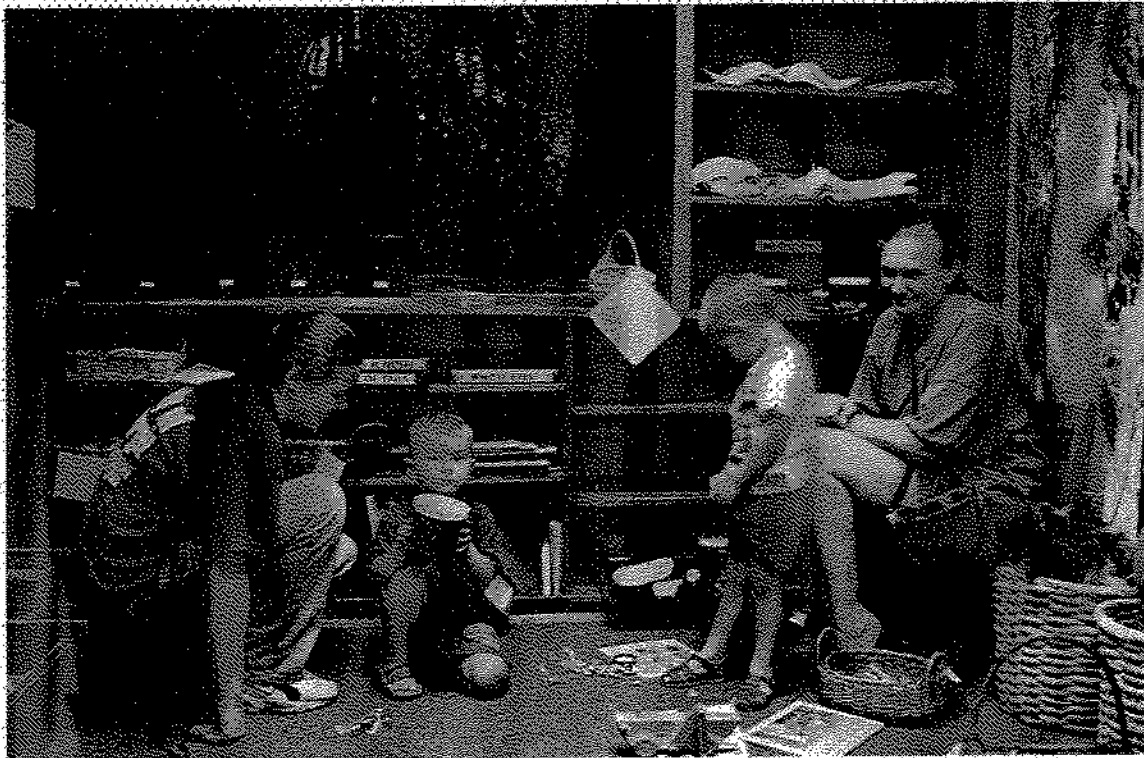
A considerable number of plans and programs designed to identify, protect, preserve and manage our County's natural resources have been developed and are currently ongoing or soon to be implemented. These programs assist in the implementation of the seven visions of the Governor's Commission on Growth in the Chesapeake Bay Region that relate to the protection of sensitive areas, stewardship of the Bay and conservation of resources. Some of these programs are summarized below.

Nature Centers

The M-NCPPC operates four nature facilities in Montgomery County, with a mission

to bridge the gap between people and nature, and to encourage the fullest appreciation of both human and natural resources. The facilities are staffed by Naturalists, whose role is to educate and impart an understanding of our natural world through hands-on experiences, and to inspire appreciation and responsibility for these natural resources. The goal is to provide safe and accessible facilities where a variety of programs are available to a diverse population. The program offerings span a broad range of natural and cultural history interests. The Park Naturalists strive to present programs and exhibits that meet the evolving needs and interest of today's society.

Interpretation plays an important role in how park visitors view public lands, and ultimately affects their overall environmental outlook. As park visitors gain knowledge and appreciation for natural habitats and their inhabitants, they become advocates of the park system offering community support and involvement. Many patrons frequently revisit



Brookside Nature Center

the nature centers and, with over 300,000 visitors to nature centers in 1997, it is evident that County residents heavily use them and enjoy their programs.

Biodiversity Areas

Significant natural communities enhance the biodiversity of the County. These areas contain one or more of the following natural resources:

- Populations of rare, threatened, endangered, or watchlist plants or animals.
- Unusual or unique types of habitat.
- Examples of high quality or otherwise significant natural communities.
- Plant or animal species with importance to the County or locality.

The locations of biodiversity areas, including some buffer area around them, are mapped by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on existing parkland. This information is intended to assist the M-NCPPC in the management, acquisition, use, and development of parklands by identifying these resources. It is also used to help guide the development of Park Management/Master Plans, and in the planning and implementation of specific development projects, both public and private, that will affect parklands.

Breeding Bird Mapping and Census Project

Observing a diverse variety of bird species is an excellent indicator of environmental health and a source of significant pleasure to many County residents. To assure that the park planning process carefully considers and preserves habitats necessary to support the most rich species diversity, particularly those species that are native to the County, the M-NCPPC is collecting data on the locations and relative numbers of birds of each of the species in the County's parks. The goal is to map bird distribution within County parks and eventually

beyond park boundaries and to track the distribution electronically using a Geographic Information System (GIS) for use in assuring the preservation of bird diversity.

"Stream Striders" Volunteer Training and Community Outreach Program

This program, supported by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, was established in September 1997. The objective of the program is to train volunteers who will lead (with park staff help) community members in park-based stream stewardship activities, including stream clean-ups, stream bank plantings, habitat enhancement projects, and watershed advocacy and outreach. Initial program efforts will focus on the Anacostia watershed, particularly the Upper Paint Branch Park streams.

Strategic Plan for Water Quality Protection

The M-NCPPC has been providing inventory and monitoring activities on the County's streams since 1995 to provide chemical, biological, and physical data fundamental to good planning and decision making. In 1996, Volumes I and II of the *Strategic Plan for Water Quality Protection* were completed by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection in cooperation with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Volume I sets out the goals, objectives, and implementation strategy to improve the County's stream quality. Volume II tracks the progress made toward achieving the water quality goals and objectives stated in Volume I.

In February 1998 Volume III of the *Strategic Plan for Water Quality Protection*, referred to as the "Montgomery County - County-wide Stream Protection Strategy," was completed. This comprehensive volume provides an assessment for each of the County's watersheds. The overall stream and habitat conditions are

analyzed, and specific goals and strategies established to protect stream quality and restore good aquatic habitat and the biological community to those streams that have been damaged. This information is invaluable for prioritizing those areas in need of protection or restoration, and to identify land for possible acquisition as a protective measure.

Little Bennett Creek Watershed Trout Management Plan

To expand and enhance the recreational trout fishing opportunities in Montgomery County, the *Little Bennett Creek Watershed Trout Management Plan* was completed in October, 1997. The plan sets out goals and implementation strategies for improving the stream conditions that limit the trout population, with the goal of establishing Little Bennett Creek and its park tributaries as "Catch and Release" trout fishing streams. Successful implementation of this plan will augment the number of high-quality, passive recreational options available to the County's residents. Management efforts will include: reforestation where tree cover is sparse in order to lower the water temperature to that which can support a breeding trout population; acquisition of additional parkland to surround the watershed tributaries; and stream bank protection and stabilization, storm water management, and in-stream habitat enhancement to reduce sedimentation, prevent excess erosion, create better spawning habitat, and otherwise improve the stream conditions necessary for a successful trout population.

County-wide Forest Management Plan

A comprehensive plan is being developed for the protection and restoration of forest habitat, early successional fields, and stream valley riparian habitat throughout the County. Some of the management issues addressed are: identification and protection of important

vegetation resources, restoration of damaged forest, field and stream valley habitat, control of exotic invasive plants, establishment of goals and strategies for the acquisition of priority forest tracts and areas with high quality plant resources, and expansion of education and volunteer programs.

Comprehensive Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in Montgomery County

In the fall of 1995 The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the M-NCPPC, and the U.S. Department of the Interior began implementing a comprehensive deer management plan. The plan provides for public education about deer; the collection of current, accurate data on deer impacts (e.g., deer-auto collisions, and damage to agricultural crops, home landscaping, gardens and natural vegetation); and research on deer ecology and population dynamics in Montgomery County. It describes available management options and evaluates the associated costs, viability, and practicality of each.

Historic and Cultural Resource Protection Programs, Plans, and Preservation Guidelines

Cultural resources include archeological sites, historic structures and sites both within and outside the park system. In 1976 the M-NCPPC prepared the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County*, an inventory of over 1,000 potential historic resources located throughout the County. Atlas resources are researched and evaluated for eligibility to be designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Designated historic resources are protected under the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the County Code.

Preservation Programs and Plans

Historic Park Properties Inventory

An inventory of cultural properties within the County park system includes approximately 100 resources. This inventory is used to assist planners in recognizing, monitoring, and managing historic and archaeological resources located on parkland. In addition, policies and guidelines have been adopted for maintaining and rehabilitation of these resources.

A summary of historic park properties is in the Appendix. Many of these properties have been designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, while others have not yet been evaluated for designation. The inventory includes a prioritization of preservation work needed for each property. Historic and archaeological resources are scheduled to be included in the Geographic Information System which will assist in identifying the location of park historic resources along with additional information including environmental setting and Master Plan status.

Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas

This program is designed to help communities use cultural tourism as a way to build local economies while protecting, developing, and promoting cultural, historical, and natural resources. Cultural tourism is travel by those seeking to discover the authentic culture, history, and natural resources of a community or region. The program provides matching grants to partnerships of local government and private interests to develop plans to guide public and private investment in the development of cultural tourism opportunities. Once such plans have been adopted locally and accepted into the program, communities become Certified Heritage Areas

and are eligible for targeted financial and technical assistance.

Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan

In 1997 Montgomery County enacted a Rustic Roads program to provide a rational system for evaluating, protecting, and enhancing the scenic roadways that reflect the agricultural character and rural origins of the County for the benefit of present and future generations. The Rustic Roads program reinforces land use policies that preserve the less-developed areas of the County, while guiding growth. Many of the Rustic Roads protected by this program are located in or adjacent to County parks.

Regulations and Guidelines for Historic Preservation

The Master Plan for Historic Preservation includes historic sites on both public parkland and private land. The Master Plan has two parts: the official, current list of the County's historic sites, and the adopted Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Master Plan for Historic Preservation

The Master Plan is designed to protect and preserve Montgomery County's historic and architectural heritage. When a historic resource is placed on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, the adoption action officially designates the property as a historic site or historic district, and subjects it to the further procedural requirements of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Designation of historic sites and districts serves to highlight the values that are important in maintaining the individual character of the County and its communities. It is the intent of the County's preservation program to provide a rational system for evaluating, protecting, and

interpreting the County's cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations of Montgomery County residents.

When historic resources are evaluated for designation in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, it must meet at least one of the following criteria as listed in Section 24A-3 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The criteria are:

Historical and cultural significance:

The historic resource:

- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, State, or Nation.
- Is the site of a significant historic event.
- Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.
- Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities.

Architectural and design significance:

The historic resource:

- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- Represents the work of a master.
- Possesses high artistic values.
- Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- Represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

Historic Preservation Designation Process

In order for any property in Montgomery County, either public or private, to be designated as a historic site on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, the resource must

follow a historic preservation designation process. Resources are evaluated to determine if they meet the criteria for historic, cultural, or architectural significance that would warrant their protection. The evaluation schedule includes public comment opportunities and review by the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Board, and County Council. The Council makes the final decision on whether or not a resource is designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. This decision forms an approved and adopted amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Historic Preservation Ordinance

The Historic Preservation Ordinance was adopted in 1976 and is part of the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Once historic resources are designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, they are subject to the protection of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the County Code. Any substantial changes to the exterior of a resource or its environmental setting must be reviewed before work commences by the Historic Preservation Commission and a historic area work permit issued under the provisions of the County's Preservation Ordinance, Section 24A-6.

Public improvements in County parks can profoundly affect the integrity of a historic area. Section 24A-6 of the Ordinance states that a Historic Area Work Permit for work on public, which includes Commission owned historic properties, or private property must be issued prior to altering an historic resource or its environmental setting. The design of public facilities in the vicinity of historic resources should be sensitive to and maintain the character of the area. Specific design considerations should be reflected as part of the Mandatory Referral review processes.

In the majority of cases, decisions regarding preservation alternatives are made at the time of public facility implementation within the process established in Section 24A of the Ordinance. This method provides for adequate review by the public and governing agencies. In order to provide guidance in the event of future public facility implementation, the amendment addresses potential conflicts existing at each site and suggests alternatives and recommendations to assist in balancing preservation with community needs.

In addition to protecting designated resources from architecturally incompatible alterations and insensitive redevelopment, the County's Preservation Ordinance also empowers the County's Department of Environmental Protection and the Historic Preservation Commission to prevent the demolition of historic buildings through neglect.

Historic Area Work Permits

For any construction, demolition, or alteration to a designated historic site or structure, a Historic Area Work Permit is required. Examples of projects requiring a historic area work permit include construction of an addition, removal of a porch, construction of a new garage, and removal of live trees. Historic Preservation Commission approval is not needed for painting non-masonry surfaces, repair work that matches that which is already in place, or planting trees or shrubs.

Standards for Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation standards adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission provide guidance for property owners, builders, and others undertaking alteration and restoration of historic resources in Montgomery County. The standards address issues of compatible use; retaining the historic character of a property; recognizing a property as a physical record of its

time, place, and use; preservation of changes to properties that have acquired historic significance in their own right; protecting distinctive examples of construction techniques or craftsmanship; repair of deteriorated historic features rather than replacement; avoidance of chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials; protection of significant archaeological resources; compatible yet differentiated additions or new construction that preserve the form and integrity of a historic property.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

Planning and Policy Development

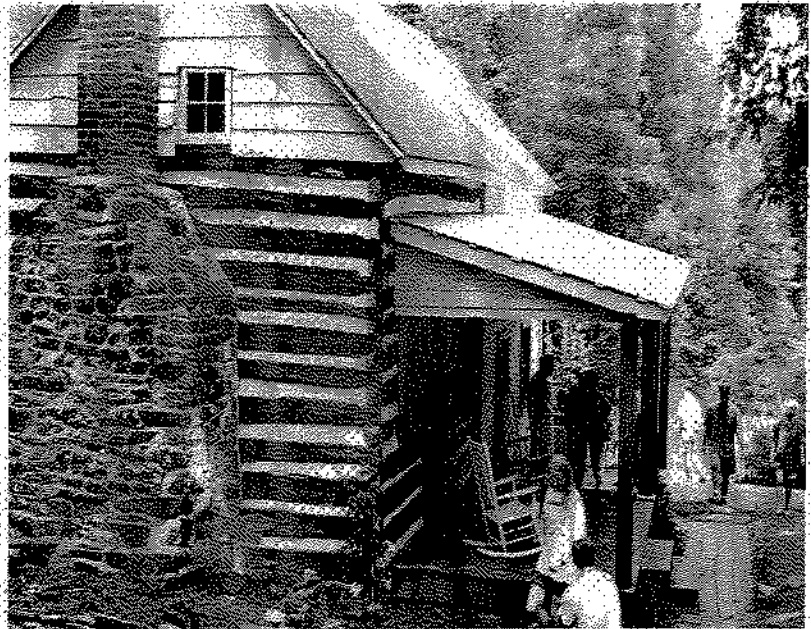
County efforts to preserve farmland began in 1964 when the County adopted the *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors)*. This plan envisions a land use pattern where intensive development is confined to a series of Corridor Cities located along major transportation arteries and separated by wedges of rural open space, low-density residential uses, and farmland. When the agricultural wedge concept was introduced, its function was to provide and protect large open spaces for recreational opportunities; provide a rural environment in which farming, mineral extraction, and other natural resource activities could be carried out; and conserve and protect the public water supply and recreation. In 1969, when the *General Plan* was updated, it confirmed the 1964 *General Plan* recommendations.

In 1974, after extensive study by the Montgomery County Planning Board, the County Council approved a new Rural Zone to protect the wedge areas from increasing development pressure. This new zone imposed a five-acre minimum lot size on approximately one-third of the County. The Rural Zone was designed specifically to preserve farmland and further implement the recommendations of the General Plan.

In the following years, it became evident that the Rural Zone (in combination with the State Agricultural Assessment Program) was not sufficient to protect farmland. From 1975-1979, almost 12,000 acres of farmland were subdivided, primarily for homes. As a result, from 1976-1980, County Planning staff, the Montgomery County Planning Board, County Council, a Council-appointed Agricultural Task Force, and a cross section of County residents wrestled with the problem of farmland and rural open space preservation.

The *Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan* was adopted by the M-NCPPC and approved by the County Council in 1980 to address the issue of the loss of farmland on the urban fringe. The Functional Plan proposed the creation and application of two zoning techniques, the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) and the Rural Cluster (RC) Zones, in conjunction with a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) system.

The RDT Zone gives strong preference to agriculture, forestry, and open space uses, as well as allowing a wide variety of agriculturally related commercial and industrial uses. It



Pleasant Hill Farm, featured in the Montgomery County Farm Tour

discourages residential uses by restricting residential development to one dwelling unit per 25 acres. Use of the RDT Zone significantly reduces fragmentation of farmland, stabilizes farmland value, minimizes development pressure, protects agricultural practices, and maintains critical mass of farmland.

In return for this loss of development potential, the TDR system provides the opportunity for an economic return of farmland placed in the RDT Zone by allowing the owner of the farmland to sell development rights at a rate of one TDR per five acres. This is equivalent to the development density permitted under the 1974 Rural Zone before the 25-acre minimum downsizing. The development rights may be utilized in specifically designated TDR receiving areas in various parts of the County determined suitable for growth. When TDR's are sold for transfer to a receiving area, a legal easement is placed on the sending area restricting the use of

the sending area to agricultural or open space purposes.

Development rights are therefore determined to be commodities that can be sold to developers and transferred to designated areas of the County where growth and development are desired. The private marketplace establishes the value of development rights, and the County is responsible for tracking the sale and transfer of rights through its records. The TDR system has the advantage of using the private sector to fund the protection of farmland.

In 1993, the County approved the *“General Plan Refinement of the Goals & Objectives for Montgomery County”*. This document updated the General Plan goals and objectives, outlining challenges, and providing a vision for the approaching 21st century. The vision for the agricultural wedge is to preserve farmland and rural open space by employing the strategies listed in Appendix 1.

Current Programs

Montgomery County currently has four programs available for land preservation: Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, Montgomery County Agricultural Easement Program and Transfer of Development Rights Program (TDR) and the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) easement programs. The new Rural Legacy Program will add a fifth program to Montgomery County’s “toolbox” of Land Preservation Program Options for landowners.

Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Act -- State Agricultural Preservation Program

Through its Department of Agriculture, the State of Maryland allows owners of agricultural

land located in an approved Agricultural Preservation district to make written application to sell agricultural preservation easements to the Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation of the Maryland Agricultural Board. The Foundation purchases agricultural preservation easements directly from landowners for cash.

The agricultural preservation program is completely voluntary and involves the establishment of Agricultural Preservation Districts in which the landowner agrees not to develop the land for at least a five year period. In exchange, normal agriculture activities (i.e., noise, odor, night operations, machinery operations, etc.) become protected activities in the district. Once a farm has been accepted into a district, the owner is eligible, but not obligated, to sell a development right easement to the Foundation. To sell the easement is to sell only one of many rights the property owner enjoys. When an easement is sold, the owner continues to own the farm or may sell it, but the farm will remain undeveloped. As of June 30, 1997, 1,806 acres have been preserved under this program.

The Montgomery County Agricultural Easement Program

The Montgomery County Agricultural Easement Program provides the County the ability to purchase agricultural land preservation easements contingent upon the land being zoned Rural, Rural Cluster, Rural Density Transfer, or the land subject to being designated as an approved State or County Agricultural Preservation District.

The County’s purpose in creating the program is to increase both the level of voluntary participation and range of eligible farmland parcels. This program has increased the effectiveness in targeting easements as part of reaching the goal of protecting 70,000 acres of

land by the year 2005. As of June 30, 1997, 5,398 acres have been preserved under this program.

The Montgomery County Transfer of Development Rights Program (TDR)

The Montgomery County TDR Program was established in 1980 as part of the the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan. The history, purpose and functional details of this program were discussed earlier in the Planning and Policy Development Section. Montgomery County has been recognized as having one of the most successful TDR programs in the nation, having preserved 39,180 acres of important agricultural land as of June 30, 1997.

The Maryland Environmental Trust

The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) was established by the Maryland state legislature in 1967 to encourage landowners to donate an easement on their property to protect scenic open areas, including farm and forest land, wildlife habitat, waterfront, unique or rare areas and historic sites. MET accepts both donated and purchased easements. In the donated easement program, the landowners are eligible for certain income, estate, gift and property tax benefits. As of December 5, 1997, 1,963.1 acres have been preserved under this program.

1997 Rural Legacy Program

Another tool for rural preservation recently developed by the State of Maryland is the Rural Legacy Program. Passed in May of 1997 as part of the Smart Growth Legislation, the Rural Legacy Program encourages local governments and private land trusts to identify Rural Legacy areas and to competitively apply for funds to complement existing land conservation efforts or create new programs.

Through this program, greenbelts and greenways dominated by farms and forests can be conserved through the voluntary purchase of conservation easements or fee-simple acquisitions. The program provides the focus and funding necessary to protect contiguous tracts of land and other strategic areas from sprawl development, and to enhance natural resource, agriculture, forestry, and environmental protection through cooperative efforts among state and local governments and private land trusts. Two aspects of this program are its selective approach, intended to save the best or most strategic farmland from development; and the evaluation process, which gives high priority to farmland that provides important natural resource benefits, such as wildlife habitat and watersheds.

Montgomery County has applied for two Rural Legacy area designations. The two separate applications represent different public-private partnerships and involve multiple jurisdictions. The first application, in conjunction with Frederick and Washington Counties and a number of private land trusts, has a joint objective of protecting land along the Potomac River. The second application, a partnership with Howard County and two private land trusts, has a joint objective of protecting land in the upper Patuxent River watershed and the historic Village of Sandy Spring.

The first application was approved by the State of Maryland in June 1998. The second application was not funded and will be revised and resubmitted in the next Rural Legacy funding application period.