



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Montgomery County, MD re-asserts itself as a leader in forest protections

MoCo. Council passes new environmental measures to combat deforestation, water pollution, and climate impacts

March 23, 2023 – ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND – On Tuesday, March 21, 2023, the Montgomery County Council unanimously voted to update to its Forest Conservation Law (Bill 25-22) which will guarantee more forests are protected from development in area. The bill, many years in the making, was recommended by the County Planning Department and backed by the Montgomery County Forest Coalition, a network of two dozen environmental organizations and community leaders.

The updated Forest Conservation Law will:

- Reduce deforestation by requiring more trees to be replanted when removed for development.
- Protect the Potomac River and local streams because trees stabilize stream banks and filter polluted runoff – the fastest growing source of water pollution in our region.
- Mitigate climate effects by protecting tree canopy that captures carbon emissions, absorbs excess rainwater, reduces flooding, and cools stream temperatures.

“This is a historic day for tree protections in Montgomery County,” said Anna Mudd, MOCO Forest Coalition co-leader and Sr. Director of Policy for Potomac Conservancy adding, “On Tuesday, Councilmembers voted not just for trees, but for clean air, wildlife habitat, responsible climate preparedness, and safe streams and drinking water sources. This is an important shift towards a healthier Montgomery County and Potomac River.”

The Council’s actions come at a critical moment as the community faces mounting threats from deforestation and the climate crisis. A [statewide forestry study](#) conducted by the Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology found that Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties accounted for 46% of forest loss in all of Maryland in recent years.

“Protecting our forests is always the best natural-based solution to tackle climate change, and to create healthy communities for people, wildlife, and waterways,” said Denisse Guitarra, MOCO Forest Coalition co-leader and MD Conservation Advocate for Nature Forward.

Local environmental laws can have far-reaching consequences as Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, Chesapeake Bay Foundation explains, “Forests are so important for improving the health of Chesapeake Bay and mitigating climate change. As Montgomery County moves forward on this issue, along with other counties that have recently strengthened local forest laws, we continue to urge state lawmakers to bolster the state’s outdated forest law, which is enabling ongoing statewide forest loss.”

The Montgomery County Forest Coalition plans to continue its work with the County Council and the county agencies towards improving the Tree Canopy Law and the Roadside Tree Protection Law.

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ABOUT POTOMAC CONSERVANCY

Potomac Conservancy is a nationally accredited land trust and clean water leader in the Potomac River region. We're committed to restoring the Potomac to full health for the five million people who rely on the river for drinking water and outdoor enjoyment. We improve local water quality through conservation initiatives that stop pollution flowing from the land into our streams and tributaries. Our impassioned base of 30,000 supporters empowers us to protect and expand streamside forests, pass water protection laws, and restore local shorelines. Learn more at <http://www.potomac.org>.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOREST COALITION

350 MoCo+
Bethesda Green+
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate+
Cedar Lane Ecosystems Study Group
Cedar Lane UU Church
Chesapeake Bay Foundation*
Chesapeake Climate Action Network+
Conservation Montgomery*
Friends of Sligo Creek*
Friends of Ten Mile Creek & Little Seneca Reservoir*
Green Sanctuary Committee of Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring+
Maryland League of Conservation Voters*
MOCO CAP+
Montgomery Countryside Alliance*
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions+
Nature Forward*
Potomac Conservancy*
Rock Creek Conservancy*
Safe Healthy Playing Fields+
Sierra Club Montgomery County Maryland*
Sugarloaf Citizens Association+
Stormwater Partners Network*
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee+
Transit Alternatives to Midcounty Highway Extended (TAME Coalition)
White Acres Farm*

*Montgomery County Forest Coalition Member

+Member of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan (CAP) Coalition.

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