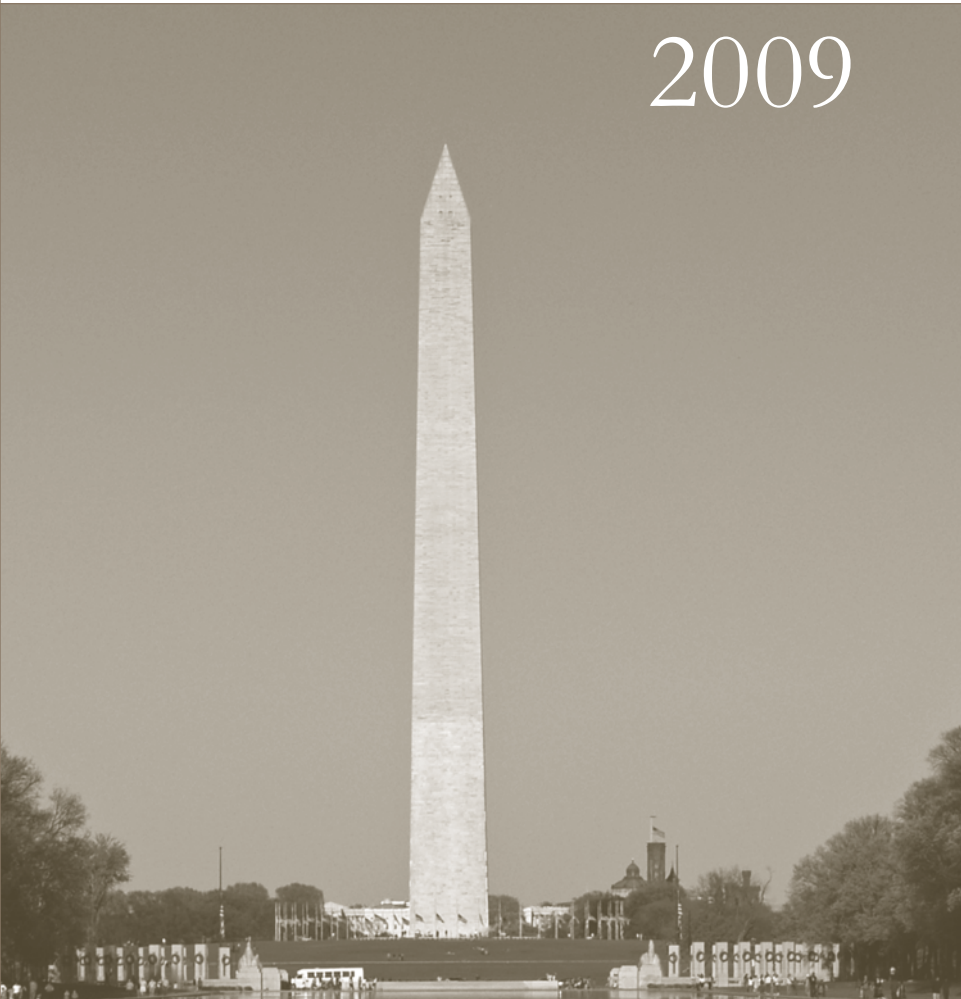




The Washington Region's Conservation Priorities
A Call to Action

2009



THE WASHINGTON REGION'S CONSERVATION PRIORITIES 2009



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INTRODUCTION

The programs of the Washington Smart Growth Alliance seek to promote the overall sustainability of our region by encouraging smart growth alternatives such as compact and infill development that can be more affordable for our citizens in the short term and more sustainable over the long term. At the same time, it is clear that *smart conservation*—preserving working open space, parkland or natural areas and restoring green components of urban environments—can help shape growth patterns over time, as well as enhance land stewardship, air and water quality, and quality of life.

Each year our independent Conservation Jury reviews numerous nominations and selects those few projects or programs that offer the most promise or that are of the highest urgency.

- › Specific parcels or geographic areas in need of preservation as working open space, parkland or natural areas;
- › State, regional or local policies/programs to promote land conservation or preservation of green infrastructure;
- › Capital projects that will benefit the natural environment;
- › Restoration initiatives focusing on contaminated and/or blighted parcels, places or resources.

The jury also selects those projects that can benefit most from our independent support as they seek to increase public awareness, obtain critically needed funding or legislative support, or gain local or regional consensus or approval.

The Alliance is made up of diverse real estate, business, environmental, and civic organizations. Therefore our indepen-

dent support signifies not only that these initiatives are critical to our region's natural heritage and working landscapes, but they will also attract thriving businesses and enhance job creation and retention.

The Alliance is a partnership of these organizations:

Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Enterprise Community Partners
Greater Washington Board of Trade
Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council
ULI Washington
ULI Terwilliger Center for Workforce Housing

The goal of this annual report is to promote conservation initiatives that contribute most to our future quality of life. In addition, this year, for the first time, the Alliance has chosen to emphasize a critical theme for our region: the need for green infrastructure planning and funding at the regional level. We explore this theme on the following pages.

For more information on the selected initiatives for 2009 and how to get involved in supporting them, visit our website at:

www.SGAlliance.org

PLANNING AND FUNDING FOR OUR REGIONAL GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

From the Chesapeake Bay to the Blue Ridge, the National Capital Region has an uncommon wealth of natural, scenic, historic, and recreational resources, from pristine wetlands on the Chesapeake to the formal parks and monuments of the District to the rugged trails of the Appalachians. Together these diverse resources are greater than the sum of their parts. They represent an economic and environmental system of green infrastructure that shapes the region and landscape that serve as our nation's front door to visitors from around the world.

Despite the efforts of individual jurisdictions and organizations, preservation of our regional green infrastructure cannot be accomplished by any single entity. Our long history of resource conservation has been about partnerships – public and private, local and national – typically because natural features and historic landscapes worthy of preservation so often ignore political boundaries. Despite this, we do not currently plan in a regionally unified way for the preservation of these resources. The obstacles to a regional approach, whether related to differing definitions or differing objectives, must be overcome.

The Alliance recommends a broad definition of green infrastructure that could form the basis for a regional consensus:

“Strategically planned and managed networks of natural lands, scenic and historic landscapes, streams and rivers, working farms and forests, and other open spaces that conserve ecosystem values and functions, shape the natural and human history of the region, and provide associated benefits – such as food, clean water, and recreation – to humans.”

The Time to Act is Now

The time to identify and preserve our regional green infrastructure is now. The threats to these resources only increase with the growth of population and development pressures in our region. Expected to recover quickly from the current recession, our region will grow by 2 million people and over 1.6 million jobs by 2030. Without a concerted region-wide effort to promote both infill development *and* the preservation of green infrastructure, a large proportion of these individuals and jobs will locate in scattered development patterns in outlying areas of the region, where many valuable green infrastructure resources lie.

When asked, the people of our region identify recreation, parks and greenspace, and a clean environment as among our greatest regional strengths. Unless we plan properly for regional green infrastructure *and* ensure adequate funding for its preservation, there will not be enough of these resources to accommodate the projected increases in population. Our parks will become overcrowded, our green space will vanish, our recreational opportunities will be rationed, and our clean environment will be in jeopardy. What are perceived to be our top regional assets in 2009 could easily turn into our region's major liabilities by 2030.

The National Capital Region Land Conservation Act of 2009

Fortunately, the urgency of our need is matched by an unprecedented opportunity for effective action. One of the few advantages of our depressed real estate market is a temporary window of opportunity to purchase land for conservation at more affordable prices. Even more critical is the potential for a dedicated source of funding for such purchases offered by the proposed *National Capital Region Land Conservation Act of 2009* (HR 2986) introduced in June 2009 by Congressman James Moran of Virginia.

This legislation would authorize \$50 million annually for the next five years, to establish up to a fifty-fifty matching grant program to conserve rapidly disappearing open space in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Washington DC–VA–

MD–WV. Currently the MSA includes the District of Columbia; Calvert, Montgomery, Prince Georges, St. Mary’s, Charles, and Frederick counties in Maryland; Jefferson County in West Virginia; and Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William, Loudoun, Clarke, Warren, Stafford, Fauquier, and Spotsylvania counties in Virginia, as well as the City of Alexandria.

The proposed bill would stimulate open space land conservation acquisition and leverage funding by state, regional, and local governments through a federal cost share grant program designed for the unique requirements of the National Capital Region. Virtually the entire region is within the Potomac River watershed, an area of national concern given the national status of the Potomac River and the fact that it is one of the primary pollution sources flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. The program would encourage landowner donations, bargain sales and other tools for land conservation and in addition, encourage long range regional planning to identify lands to be conserved in the National Capital Region for a variety of purposes enumerated in the plan, including the following:

- » Parks
- » Open space
- » Green space corridors linking public lands and/or lands subject to conservation restrictions
- » Agriculture
- » Forests
- » Fish and wildlife habitat
- » Watershed protection
- » Historic preservation
- » Sensitive environmental area protection
- » Public recreation

The bill proposes to amend the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930 to reinstitute a process for Federal, State, regional and local park, land conservation, planning, environmental agencies and stakeholder groups to focus on land conservation and green open space needs at a regional level. Responsibility for the administration of the program would be vested in the U.S.

National Park Service, the federal park agency in the National Capital Region and one which has long experience with and a proud history of land conservation.

The house proposal has garnered co-sponsors in the House of Representatives (Norton, Wolf, Wittman, Connolly, Hoyer, Van Hollen, and Edwards) and Senator Benjamin Cardin of Maryland introduced a duplicate bill (S 1525) in the Senate in July 2009 (with Mikulski, Webb and Warner as co-sponsors). Both bills have been referred to the appropriate committees, the House Committee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The legislation evolved from discussions with Federal, State and local public officials, environmental and conservation groups, urban planners, and concerned citizens as well as an examination of how regional land conservation was being addressed in other metropolitan regions.

The passage of these bills into law could provide the funding so desperately needed for preservation of our regional green infrastructure, represented only in small part by the projects described in this booklet. Perhaps as importantly, the program would provide a framework for regional green infrastructure planning.

For more information on the National Capital Region Land Conservation Act of 2009:

Office of Rep. James P. Moran
2239 Rayburn Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC.
202.226.0015

Library of Congress (THOMAS)
thomas.loc.gov, search by bill numbers
HR 2986/S 1525

2009 Conservation Priority

MARVIN GAYE PARK



WHY A PRIORITY?

- › The Marvin Gaye Park is the longest municipal park in the District of Columbia, following the path of Watts Branch, D.C.'s largest tributary of the Anacostia River.
- › The park, once fallen into disrepair, now enjoys the renewed interest and attention of the community, represented by major public and private restoration efforts and substantial investment.
- › Only with continued community leadership, sustained intergovernmental partnership and capital investment can the park fulfill its potential as a model of urban park restoration and park-based community renewal, not only for this region but for the nation.

The Marvin Gaye Park, originally known as Watts Branch Park, winds for two miles through residential neighborhoods in Northeast Washington that are home to thousands of families. In recent decades, the park fell into disrepair and became a dumping ground and a haven for illicit drug use. However, since 2001, the nonprofit Washington Parks & People has partnered with the District government and others to restore and develop the park as a resource for the health, education, and economic stability of the surrounding neighborhoods. The clean-up tasks alone were enormous, involving the removal of 3,000 tires, 13,000 hypodermic needles, 50,000 bags of garbage, and over 5,000,000 pounds of bulk trash and debris, including 89 abandoned cars and trucks. Over 55,000 volunteers and hundreds of job trainees have participated in this effort.

The District Government has made the restoration of the Watts Branch/Marvin Gaye Park Stream Valley central to its community revitalization efforts. Various departments have allocated or invested over \$600 million to improve transportation, public safety, education, environmental restoration, water

quality and economic development in the area. Major public improvements include construction of a hiker/biker trail from Minnesota Avenue to the Maryland border, with new lighting, pedestrian/bike bridges, and traffic-calming curb extensions at street crossings and installation of a new playground at Heritage Green. Additional park improvements are underway. Other major investments include \$104 million in housing re-development by the Capitol Gateway HOPE VI project and the reconstruction of H.D. Woodson High School at a cost of \$109 million.

larger watershed. Already, in partnership with Parks & People and the Department of Parks and Recreation, DDOE has planted 2,000 native trees in the corridor. The District's Water and Sewer Authority has replaced sewer lines and re-lined pipes to help prevent future leaks. New public/private partnerships include the Heart & Soul initiative, a partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association and others to boost park-based health and fitness. The U.S. Forest Service is partnering with D.C.'s Urban Forest Administration to fund the D.C. Green Corps job training program.

The District Department of Environment (DDOE) is leading the stream restoration effort, and has allocated over \$5 million to restore eroded stream banks and install other improvements designed to reduce sediment in the stream. With a variety of tree-planting partners, they will also replant trees to help stabilize the stream and improve forested stream buffers and the

The Alliance commends the collaborative partnerships that have been so effective in restoring this important community asset. Sustained community support and additional capital investment will be required to bring the vision of a healthy stream and park system to fruition.



For more information:

District of Columbia
Department of Parks
& Recreation
www.dpr.dc.gov
202.673.7647

Washington Parks & People
www.washingtonparks.net
202.744.8695



HERITAGE GREEN
Marvin Gaye Park

EDAW | AECOM
DHA

2009 Conservation Priority

PATUXENT RIVER GREENWAY



WHY A PRIORITY?

- › The Patuxent River watershed encompasses 900 square miles of land including forests, wetlands, floodplains, wildlife habitat, farms, rural landscapes, aquatic life, and archaeological and historical sites.
- › The watershed has become increasingly urbanized over the last four decades, but over 40 percent of the area remains forested.
- › Funding cuts could delay public and private efforts to preserve open space, establish riparian buffers, and open public access to the river.

The Patuxent River Watershed is rich in resources. The upper watershed includes trout streams and a dual reservoir system, then becomes a large tidal fresh water ecosystem and continues as a productive estuary until it empties into the Chesapeake Bay in Southern Maryland. The river has become the focus of a concerted effort by public and private partners to permanently preserve open space along the waterfront, establish riparian buffers to improve water quality, and fully develop a Patuxent Water Trail extending over 80 miles of the river's 115-mile length.

The Patuxent River is the longest river contained wholly within the state of Maryland and drains over 900 square miles of land in St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles, Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Howard, and Montgomery counties. The Patuxent River Commission, a broad-based and interjurisdictional agency staffed by the Maryland Department of Planning,

was established by the State of Maryland in 1980 to address Patuxent watershed issues. The Commission has played a leading role in implementing land management policies within the watershed, and since 1995, also has taken on the role of implementing a nutrient and sediment reduction plan. Because of the increasingly developed nature of the watershed, urban non-point and point sources both account for approximately one-third of the nutrient pollution. Nutrient loading from these sources increases with population growth within the watershed, which has risen 136 percent between 1970 and 2000, and is projected to grow another 22 percent by 2020.

Other major public partners working to conserve and protect the Patuxent range from state to local governments, including Maryland's Departments of Natural Resources, Environment, Planning, Transportation, and Agriculture; the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission; and Anne Arundel County and Prince George's County, among others.

Key nonprofit organizations working within the watershed include Maryland Environmental Trust, Trust for Public Land, Patuxent Riverkeeper and the Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust.

These public and private organizations are working together to develop a Patuxent River Greenway to link natural areas already protected through public ownership, conservation easements, or agricultural easements or designations. The Patuxent River Water Trail, extending for over 80 miles from the mouth of the river to the Triadelphia Reservoir in the north, provides an opportunity for people to personally experience the waterway and thereby become better stewards of the Patuxent River and its watershed resources.

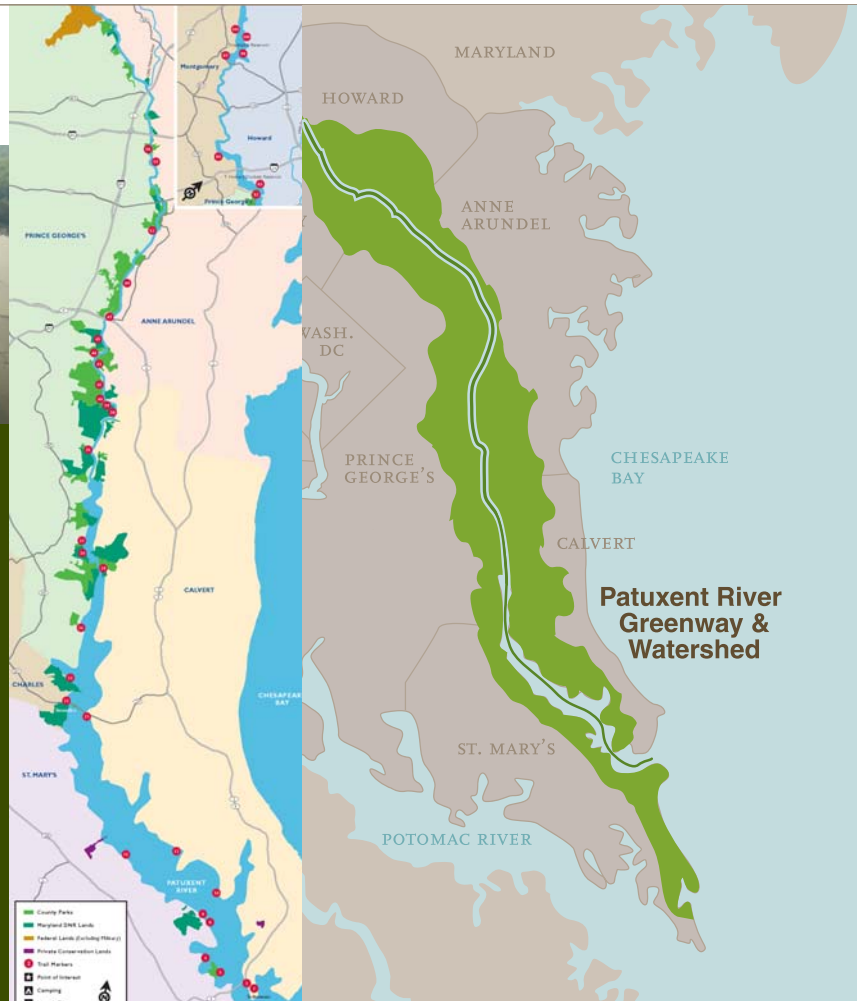
The Alliance celebrates and supports these efforts. If they are ultimately to succeed, adequate levels of funding for land conservation and protection must be sustained.



For more information:

Patuxent Riverkeeper
www.paxriverkeeper.org
 301.249.8200

Maryland Department of
 Natural Resources
www.dnr.state.md.us
 410.260.8429



2009 Conservation Priority

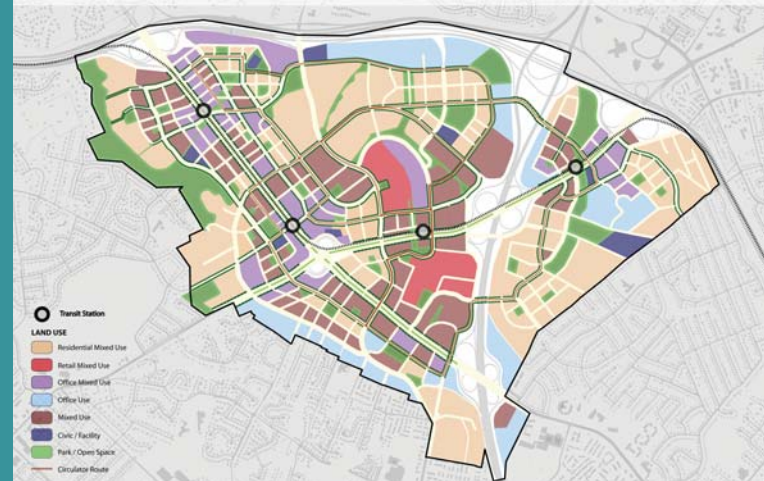
THE GREENING OF TYSONS

Tysons Area Parks and Open Space Network



TYSONS CORNER PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

Tysons Area Land Use, Parks and Open Space Network



TYSONS CORNER PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

WHY A PRIORITY?

- › If implemented, the “Transforming Tysons” plan will increase the residents of this major shopping district from 17,000 to 100,000 and jobs from 105,000 to 200,000 by 2050.
- › The “Greening of Tysons” represents a focus on environmental stewardship that will double open space to 320 acres and establish stormwater management goals that will allow for stream stabilization and restoration.
- › This ambitious plan faces many potential obstacles as recommendations are translated into adopted policies and regulations that guide redevelopment.

Tysons Corner, the 12th largest shopping district in the nation, is dominated by large superblocks, widely separated campus-style buildings, and roadways. Built for the convenience of automobile travelers, it has more parking spaces than people, and very few safe pedestrian amenities. Previous plans to redevelop the area into an urban district have been entertained but never pursued. The approval of four new Metro stations to serve the district brought a new opportunity to envision a more balanced, compact and higher-density urban district – a more complete community.

The prospect of such substantial redevelopment also offered a chance for extensive new “green” building, creation of a network of open spaces that would have environmental as well as recreational benefits, and institution of new stormwater techniques that could contribute to stream restoration in the area. In 2008, when the Tysons Land Use Task Force presented their plan to “Transform Tysons” after a three year

period of extensive public outreach, it had a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship or the “Greening of Tysons.”

The plan recommends ambitious environmental goals. All new buildings must meet green construction standards, and all buildings must be LEED Silver certified by 2013.

The plan calls for an integrated park and open space network including an eight-to-ten acre park in North Central Tysons and a three-to-five acre park near Tysons Central station, which could be used for farmers markets, concerts or festivals. The system will add 160 acres of open space, doubling the current amount.

The stream restoration plan is perhaps the most ambitious of all, for it would require that stormwater runoff be equivalent to that of predevelopment forested conditions; in effect stormwater must be contained on site or recycled.

Currently, 70 percent of stormwater runs untreated into local streams, to the detriment of Old Courthouse Spring Branch, Rocky Run, Scotts Run and Pimmit Run. Reaching this goal would require water reuse and the use of Limited Impact Development techniques such as rain gardens, vegetated swales, porous pavement, vegetated roofs, tree box filters and ponds at every opportunity, including public and private improvements, streets or buildings.

The recommended plan is now at a critical juncture. Fairfax County has unanimously accepted it, but now its broad recommendations must be translated into detailed Comprehensive Plan text.

The Alliance supports this bold plan and urges Fairfax County to develop equally bold policies and regulations to guide its implementation. Only in that way can the goals of “transforming” and “greening” Tysons be met.



For more information:

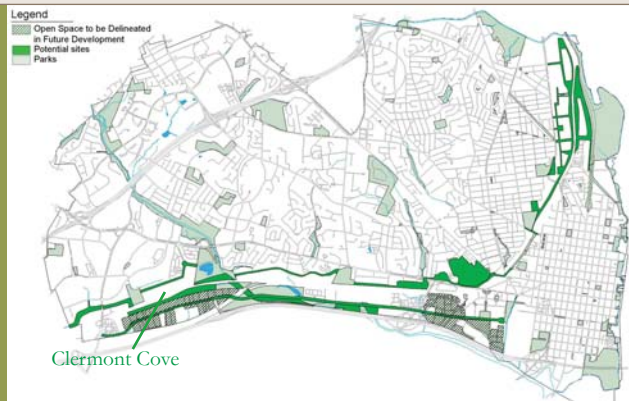
Chairman, Tysons Corner
Land Use Task Force
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/tysonscorner
703.893.3336

Fairfax County Department of
Planning & Zoning
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz
703.324.3109



2009 Conservation Priority

ALEXANDRIA'S GREEN CRESCENT



WHY A PRIORITY?

- › One of the nation's most densely settled cities, Alexandria faces enormous challenges in providing adequate open space for all its citizens. By 2012 the City has pledged to add 34 acres to current inventories to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population.
- › The Open Space Plan established the guiding concept of a Green Crescent to link currently isolated parks and natural areas along the City's eastern and southern borders. Clermont Cove, a 14.5-acre wooded site, is among the top five priority parcels for open space preservation.
- › One of the most regionally significant sections of the Green Crescent is the Waterfront Area, which is now undergoing a renewed planning effort with active community participation.

Alexandria's Open Space Plan was first adopted in 2003 through a collaborative community process that included monthly meetings with the Open Space Steering Committee, three Planning District meetings, and a citywide Open Space Summit. The overall objective of the plan that resulted is that of "making connections." A unifying theme for implementation of the plan is a Green Crescent that links existing parks and open spaces, ultimately creating a series of continuous parks, parkways, greenways, trails, and open areas.

The Green Crescent follows the alignment of the City's primary rivers and streams: Potomac River, Four Mile Run, Cameron Run and Holmes Run and will build upon the existing parks, natural areas and other open spaces through the addition of key unprotected key sites.

Among these key sites is Clermont Cove, located adjacent to the City's Clermont Natural Area and near Ben Brenman Park and the Cameron Station Linear Park. A hundred feet wide and three-quarters of a mile long, this 14.5-acre parcel is one of the largest heavily wooded areas in the City. It includes

a Resource Protection Area (RPA) along Cameron Run and provides habitat for wildlife, including fox, deer, and other small mammals. Long-term uses of the site could include a nature park with trails to provide both access to the interior of the site and a pedestrian and bike link between east and west Eisenhower Avenue and east to the City's Clermont Natural Area. Protection of this site would add substantially to the City's open space inventory and reduce by almost half the remaining balance of open space the City has pledged to add to its inventories by 2012.

In late 2008 the Open Space Advisory Group recommended that options for protecting this land be explored. The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, a key advisor of the City on negotiating easements and land acquisitions, partnered with the Virginia Outdoor Foundation in discussions with the landowner, who is interested in preserving this valuable land. The Alliance supports implementation of the Green Crescent through protection of this and other key sites.

The Alexandria Waterfront is another major segment of the Green Crescent and the City has acquired some high priority parcels along the waterfront. In April 2009 the City launched a renewed and inclusive planning process scheduled to produce a final Waterfront Area Plan by mid-2010. Consistent with the Open Space Plan's objective of "making connections," one goal of the Waterfront Area Plan is to improve access to the waterfront and provide continuous pedestrian connectivity. For inspiration, the Planning Commission visited New York's Battery Park City, which offers lessons in incorporating public art, ferry and terminal operations, utilization of open space, and connectivity along a working waterfront.

The Alliance commends the City of Alexandria's efforts to provide open space opportunities to its citizens through implementation of the Green Crescent. A successful plan for the historic Alexandria Waterfront will not only improve the quality of life for Alexandrians, but for the citizens of the National Capital Region at large.



GUIDING CONCEPT: ENHANCE ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

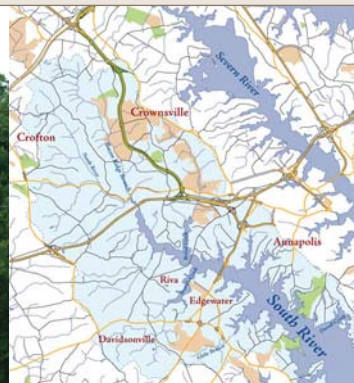


For more information:

Alexandria Department of Recreation,
Parks and Cultural Activities
www.alexandriava.gov/recreation
703.838.5041

Alexandria Department of Planning
and Zoning
[www.alexandriava.gov/city/
planning_zoning](http://www.alexandriava.gov/city/planning_zoning)
703.838.4666

SOUTH RIVER GREENWAY



WHY A PRIORITY?

- › The South River Greenway contains two of the largest forested tracts remaining in Anne Arundel County, along with 100 miles of streams, 800 acres of wetlands, and a number of historical and cultural sites.
- › The Greenway provides regionally important habitat for birds, reptiles and aquatic species and if preserved could also provide a network of trails to serve the region's recreational needs.
- › Located in the Washington-Baltimore corridor, the unprotected forested lands have faced intense development pressures. Key purchases and easements to connect the 2,500 protected acres could help save the South River Greenway.

Bounded by the Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Annapolis areas, the South River Greenway contains a remarkable variety of natural resources. With over 6,000 acres of undeveloped forests, including 2,400 acres of interior forests, the area provides watershed protection for the South River and the Chesapeake Bay, into which it flows.

These forested lands represent a “high priority forest block under significant development pressure” according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources’ Green Print Program and the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Resource Lands Assessment Report. Seventy-five percent of the undeveloped forests have highly erodible soils. This means that small disturbances to the land result in large impacts to streams that transport sediment to the South River and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay. Despite the extensive forest buffers, 21 miles of streams within the Greenway are considered to be in poor condition as a result of land use changes, primarily roads and subdivisions.

The Greenway also includes fifteen types of wetland types covering 800 acres and is a historical spawning area for yellow perch and river herring. Eighteen species of Forest Interior Birds, including several species at risk have been documented in the Greenway and the Maryland/D.C. Audubon has identified it as an Important Bird Area. In addition, the Gap Analysis Report, a report of biodiversity in the Mid-Atlantic region, has identified it as a regionally important area for reptiles and birds.

In addition to these natural resources, the South River Greenway contains a number of historically significant cultural resources, including a Native American burial ground and the remains of a colonial wharf along the Bacon Ridge Branch. The Crownsville State Hospital opened in 1911 to serve African American patients needing psychiatric care.

With key land acquisitions or easements, the South River Greenway has great potential to become a natural area park

for the region. A network of trails connecting Annapolis, Crownsville, Crofton, Gambrills, Millersville, Edgewater, Severna Park, the Navy Dairy Farm, and beyond could be developed. Much of this trail system already exists in the nearly 2,500 acres of land owned by state or local governments. The 546-acre Bacon Ridge Natural Area (the former Crownsville site), which will soon be turned over to Anne Arundel County, forms the core of land already under protection.

A number of organizations and agencies have joined forces to preserve this greenway and restore its wildlife habitats and streams. They include, among others, Anne Arundel County, Biophilia Foundation, Scenic Rivers Land Trust, Maryland Environmental Trust, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and South River Federation.

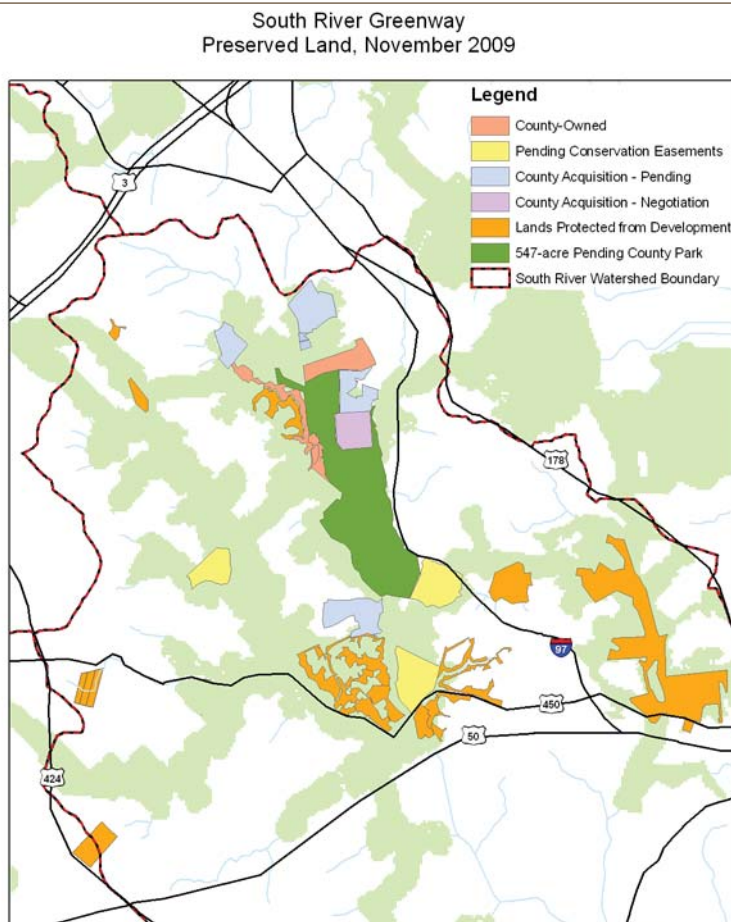
The Alliance applauds and supports their efforts to preserve this natural and recreational resource for our region.



For more information:

Biophilia Foundation
www.biophiliafoundation.org
 410.268.1802

Scenic Rivers Land Trust
www.srlt.org
 410.424.4000



Map Created by U.S.F.W.S Chesapeake Bay Field Office, November 2009



The goals of the Washington Smart Growth Alliance are to enhance regional collaboration; encourage mixed-use, pedestrian- and transit-oriented development projects; promote housing and transportation choices for a range of incomes, particularly through infill development; and respect and conserve significant environmental, cultural and recreational resources. To learn more about the Alliance, please visit our website, www.SGAlliance.org.

Conservation Jury

Kendra Bricchle, *The Conservation Fund*

Sam Black, *Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P., Chair, Washington Smart Growth Alliance*

Hamer Campbell, *Maryland-National Capital Building Industry Association*

Lee Epstein, *Chesapeake Bay Foundation*

Michael Kane, *Piedmont Environmental Council, Chair of the Conservation Jury*

Robert Kaufman, *Augustine Land and Development*

Stella Koch, *Andubon Naturalist Society*

Michael Nardolilli, *Northern Virginia Conservation Trust*

Lisa Rother, *ULI Washington*

William Thompson, *American Society of Landscape Architects*

› To download this report, please visit our Conservation Priorities web page at: http://www.SGAlliance.org/2009_RCPL.pdf

› To nominate a conservation initiative for listing in 2010, see the nomination form at: www.SGAlliance.org/rcplnom.doc.

Acknowledgements

Deborah Mines Westbrooke, *Executive Director, Washington Smart Growth Alliance, Principal Author*

Meeting Facilitators

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Mike Kane, *Piedmont Environmental Council of Virginia*

Matthew Rader, *Urban Land Institute*

Lisa Rother, *ULI Washington*

The Alliance is a partnership of these the organizations:

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Enterprise Community Partners

Greater Washington Board of Trade

Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council

ULI Washington

ULI Terwilliger Center for Workforce Housing

Washington Smart Growth Alliance

Deborah Mines Westbrooke

Executive Director

4909 Cordell Avenue, 2nd Floor

Bethesda, Maryland 20814

301.986.5959

dwestbrooke@SGAlliance.org

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