

## SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

**Project:** Bacon Ridge Natural Area – Severn Chapel Area (P588001)  
**Purpose:** Community Meeting  
**Date:** May 3, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.

A community meeting was held in accordance with Section 17-2-107 of the Anne Arundel County Code to introduce the proposed development to the public. The meeting was held at Crofton Public Library in Crofton, Maryland. There were approximately 66 persons in the audience. The following members of the development team were present:

Emma Pfefferkorn – Anne Arundel County Department of Public Works  
Michael Pieranunzi – Century Engineering, a Kleinfelder Company  
Lydia Vaccare – Century Engineering, a Kleinfelder Company

Representatives of Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks were also present for the meeting and assisted in answering questions: Chris Carroll, Jessica Hardy, and Nick Shearman.

This document provides a summary of questions, comments, and responses received during the in-person community meeting and after the meeting during the online comment period. The meeting minutes are provided in a separate document.

The online comment period for this meeting ended May 17, 2023 at 11:59 PM.

### IN-PERSON QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Q: Regarding the ranger training facility, is that for shooting practice? At North Tract in Patuxent, the shooting ranges there aren't enough for some stray bullets that go overhead, plus there's a lot of noise.

A: That is for ranger training practice only. This is not a facility that will be open to the public. It will be used approximately six to eight times per year, and would be pre-advertised so all park users would know when that is occurring. It is probably four to six rangers each year that we would train. Different from a lot of ranges, we actually use suppressed weapons in our deer management programs. While they are loud, and a horse would hear them, they're more comparable to a 22 rifle, so the sound is very limited on those.

Q: What criteria was used to design the horse and bus trailer parking area? I'm concerned about the length and the width and the aisle length as well. It doesn't look like the island is sufficient, not just for backing and turning, but for horses unloading with the ramp down, where are we going to tie? Are they sufficiently wide enough for tying to the side, which is preferred, or to the back?

A: We followed general guidelines for the layout. The spaces shown are fifty-five feet deep and fifteen feet wide.

Q: On the driveway improvements, are you looking at the sight lines on either side of the driveway?

A: We are looking at the sight lines, our traffic group is also reviewing this plan.

Q: How does the amount of parking compare with what's there now, and how does that compare with parking at the other trailheads within Bacon Ridge?

A: The other trail entrances have limited parking, about twenty spaces each. Currently there is parking on site for approximately fifteen to twenty cars. There is occasional parking along the public roadway.

Q: What is the anticipated impact to local traffic and do you anticipate needing any improvements or widening or a turn lane on Severn Chapel Road?

A: The plan is currently under review with traffic. The goal was to align the entrance with Chukker Lane.

Q: Following up on the traffic question, it's not just traffic coming in and out, it's the actual traffic on those roads. On Severn Chapel, Millersville Road, Waterbury, that all cumulatively have an impact. You have a narrow road. How much traffic will be generated on the local roads?

A: Parks generate lower average daily trips than other developments such as hospitals and high-rises for example. They are usually off-hours.

Q: One of the things that concerned me when you talked about the [horse] water station is biosecurity, there are issues with biosecurity with food and water being shared between horses. Is there a process to create a committee that gives you valuable, effective information for the equestrian uses?

A: We are coordinating with an experienced equestrian and will refine the design.

Q: Schooley Mill has a giant water storage tank, that helps with not sharing water, you can just take your bucket to it and turn the knob. It works really well, and they have their built-in mounting block. I don't think that they would have hitching posts. I personally love trailer riding there because of their amenities for my horse. If you could consider that as an example.

A: We will consider Schooley Mill as an example for the horse trailer amenities.

Q: I live off Severn Chapel, and there's been an increase in water flow down Severn Chapel since there's been more and more construction at the top of Severn Chapel, around Chukker and those of us that have lived there a few years have noticed that flooding starts to come down when we get heavy rain. Do you anticipate the improvements that you're doing affecting that or creating any more of that flooding that's coming down?

A: We do not anticipate the improvements creating more flooding. In reference to the proposed stormwater management facilities, our engineers do a study of how much water flows off of the site, and we are required to treat that amount of water and release it at the same rate. For our site, we will be releasing water at the same rate as what is there today. So the stormwater management we are proposing will make our site not add more water to any of the off-site drainage.

Q: For the gun range, there are houses that are really close. When you say six to eight times a year, are you talking about in the afternoon?

A: For general ranger practice each year, we need to qualify for Maryland Department of Natural Resources, which has set standards that our rangers need to meet for accuracy. And that's done by a qualified instructor. Typically the training takes three or four hours, only a half day.

Q: Where does the ranger training currently occur?

A: Arundel Fish and Game in Annapolis have [the rangers] as guests on a temporary basis.

Q: I'm concerned that there is going to be carryover, that lots of other people are going to want to use your range and it's going to be more than six to eight days a year.

A: The design has about two shooting lanes, so it is just for a small group, it does not have the amenities that a typical range would have. Again the intent is that it is just for rangers.

Q: Will you be putting signs to that effect, no shooting allowed, no hunting allowed?

A: We absolutely would. We continue to make it clear that it is a staff only facility.

Q: Going back to the intersection, that piece of road is incredibly dangerous. There is no room on either side of the asphalt, and we have people that ride bikes through there. It's already very dangerous, so putting a wider driveway is not going to fix that problem. Just because there's a crosswalk and there's lights, people don't slow down. The road where the trailers are pulling out, if somebody comes up too fast and there's a bike on the road, it's going to be a disaster.

A: We will continue to review the traffic situation.

Q: How are horses going to mix with the mountain bikes? Which trails are for horses?

A: Trail modifications are not in the scope of this project.

Q: You have 92 parking spaces and you're looking to put in pavilions, are you looking to do special events here? That seems like a large amount of parking spaces for a community park. Is the intended use here for special events like 5k's or mountain bike races?

A: Right now during the busy times, mostly on the weekends, there are people parking alongside the road. We are trying to provide enough parking to avoid that. There was no original intention for the parking to be for special events. Operationally, we are evaluating special events. At this site, we have not completed operational planning until we see the facility use. We want to see how the park operates as its intended use, which is more passive use of mountain biking, hiking, and equestrian. Those ninety spaces are average for getting the users on a busy weekend off the road and off the grass.

Q: So you're assuming you might have 150 or 300 people using it at once?

A: The amount of parking is designed to address the safety concern with the current small parking areas, people are parking along the sides of those roadway systems, parking in people's private property. The intent is to get them off of those illegal parking spots and into a standard parking lot.

Q: If there is a change made or a survey to make any changes to Severn Chapel, where does that fall into the process timeline?

A: The design is going through traffic review right now. The review will determine if further improvements are necessary.

Q: Will we be notified of that change so we could have a chance to provide comments?

A: As part of this project, there are not planned improvements to Severn Chapel Road.

Q: I'm at this park almost every day. I am horrified by that [existing] entrance and exit every time I go in and go out. I go every day and it still sneaks up on me, I say a prayer and hope for the best every time I turn left to go out. it is a very curvy road and people fly. You said that it didn't require traffic investigation, but it really needs something.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thanks for considering the equestrian use of this park. Around the trailer parking area, I don't know what your budget is like, but would you consider having a pavilion with picnic tables under it, maybe an enclosed paddock area?

A: Right now we probably only have the budget for the planned program, but please do submit your feedback to Rec and Parks for future improvements.

Q: I live in the neighborhood adjacent to the park. The idea of mixing guns and a beautiful space, it just seems crazy to me. I can't imagine going out in this beautiful park and there are sudden guns going off. I don't understand the County planning and budgeting process, but it just seems crazy and inconsistent.

A: When the original parcel that made up the core of Bacon Ridge was transferred from the State and the County acquired it, the original easement of about 600 acres is actually a DNR managed hunting site currently. So right now there is existing use. During hunting seasons, there are people hunting the entire southern portion of Bacon Ridge while it's being used. When it was handed over, that was a requirement of the State that that continue.

Q: I'm not really familiar with how the County operates, can you advise, as a citizen, how can we stop this or change it, or how can we get it moved or changed?

A: The purpose of this meeting is to receive that feedback. We appreciate your feedback. This meeting is being recorded and will be posted online.

Q: So is this cast in stone, how does that work?

A: It is not set in stone, and although this particular amenity was included in the master plan phase, we will take this back to Rec and Parks and discuss.

Q: I am also a resident who lives next door to this, I am completely against the gun range.

A: Thank you.

Q: You're saying deer management, I don't know what that means. Does that mean you're shooting deer in that area now? Because we don't hear any guns going off now.

A: We as the County run deer management at multiple sites throughout the County, trying to balance out the lack of natural predation. That's done in consultation and only under approval with DNR. It is not a recreational hunting program, it's an environmentally based hunting program. The program currently at Bacon Ridge is actually not managed by us, again, that was an agreement with the State. Our training at Bacon Ridge, if that range is built, is for our rangers to qualify on the safe and accurate use of firearms that we employ at other sites currently.

Q: So they will just be practicing there? Will there be certain times of the week, so they'll not do it during horse traffic times, or children traffic times?

A: Correct, just practicing. Our estimated use is six to eight times per year. We would give plenty of adequate public notice, multiple weeks in advance of when that is occurring. We would take into consideration any preferences on timing with the neighbors.

Q: How do you do the public notice?

A: Public notice would occur on our website, through social media, and on site at the park.

Q: You are already using another site for this that you said temporarily, and you're only doing it six to eight times a year, what's the probability that you would be able to continue to use the current site that you're using? If there's such a pushback on that range being built?

A: That is something that we can look into.

Q: Are you sure the investment of building a gun range to use six to eight times a year outweighs the concerns of this, it's not a good investment.

A: Thank you.

Q: Are there going to be any additional security measures?

A: The rangers out at the site are resource conservation and protection rangers. They are not only assigned to Bacon Ridge, but also manage the County's 9,000 acres of natural resource land. With the increased use, we would hope to have a staff member present within the Bacon Ridge area every day that we're open during typical hours that the park is open. We've requested funding for additional staff for resource conservation.

Q: Will there be cameras or any additional security measures besides rangers?

A: We don't currently have plans to add cameras.

Q: Do we need to tell our council member that we want that funding?

A: Some of these discussions will need to occur with Anne Arundel County Police and how they will access and enforce that site.

Q: Has there been any discussion about the possibility of an entrance fee at any time in the future?

A: There are no current plans for that.

Q: Following up on that question, will there be an option for a donation box for those of us who use the park and want to leave something toward maintenance if there's no fee?

A: One of the things we've talked about in the future is to establish a "Friends" group as we have at many of our other parks, we have the Friends of Quiet Waters, the Friends of Downs Park. We'd eventually hope to have a Friends of Bacon Ridge Natural Area, that would be a way that money could be donated to help support that park specifically.

Q: The busses, it's just County school busses? What's the bus traffic that's going to be coming through?

A: It will be for educational purposes, whether County or private. The idea would be that this is an educational resource.

Q: Have you all talked to the Anne Arundel County Police to use their training center in Davidsonville?

A: We have, it's been under construction for a long time. We've been talking for the last three years about trying to access there, that is a possibility.

Q: Somebody asked about a pavilion and picnic tables, I'm wondering about restrooms.

A: There is currently a porta-pot on site.

Q: We trail riders are pretty self-sufficient usually. In the general scheme, you put your trailer in, you unload your horses, you tie them usually to the side of your trailer. So having a water source there would be super, but it would just need to be a spicket to go put a bucket under and take back to your trailer. We don't share water sources.

A: We really appreciate everybody bringing that to our attention, we will definitely look into that and look at Schooley Mill and their parking area.

Q: Is the Bacon Ridge area approved for equestrian use at this time or do all these approvals have to be in before horses are allowed, what's the guidelines there?

A: We've had several meetings with the equestrian community at this time. The original intent of Bacon Ridge going back as long as 15 years ago have that as part of the conversation. Bacon Ridge is a little interesting in that it has different easements over different portions of the property. When you head south of the Forney [Severn Chapel] area, the Scenic Rivers Land Trust and the Maryland Environmental Trust are involved in vetting those types of decisions. We will be requesting, in the near future, official approval. We're not at a formal stage yet. Forney [Severn Chapel Area] itself is not under the same type of restrictions. Once we have an adequate plan, we could allow equestrian use very quickly at the Forney property [Severn Chapel Area], but of course there are more stakeholders than just equestrian, there is our hiking group, trail running group, and also the mountain bike group that built the trails that are in there now. Our plan within the next two months is to have a meeting with those various stakeholder groups.

Q: Can you make sure that information is available to those of us who would like to participate?

A: Those are typically posted on the website. They're not generally a public format meeting but normally representatives from each of those organizations.

Q: Will the trailhead be closed during construction? If it is, and the other two parking areas are so limited and dangerous, can they be expanded prior to the construction?

A: There will definitely be times during construction when the Forney property [Severn Chapel Area] is closed down, as we are going to be building the road. Augmenting the existing parking facilities is not currently in the plan.

Q: I understand they're looking into doing something with Crownsville, so that also could be a good parking area.

A: As of right now there are no hard plans with Crownsville, but Rec and Parks is aware.

Q: The master plan talks about Phase 1 being the ranger station and the parking lots. Would you consider moving the equestrian parking lot into Phase 1? Because we need virtually nothing except for the driveway entrance to be expanded to provide safe ingress and egress. All we need is a field to drive on. We're used to taking our waste with us, we're used to running our own water, and we tie to our trailers, so we really don't need anything but a field to drive into. So if you could consider moving this into Phase 1, that would be great.

A: The parking lots are all in Phase 1. The only thing that might move to Phase 2 are some of the improvements on the historic aspects of the project. The site work is all part of Phase 1.

Q: I'm a rider and a hiker and Bacon Ridge is the best place to hike in Anne Arundel County, I've hiked every single trail. There are places where the horses are in totally different places than the bikers, and when you do see a bike, everybody gets along. I'm so excited because Anne Arundel has no place to take your horse to ride. Like today I went up to this little park, Piney Run, you could fit probably five trailers, you go around, there it is, and it was the most beautiful thing. Bohemia River State Park, again, how they did it, it was just a gravel thing, not Anne Arundel County, but it's a great place to take your horse, and everybody gets along, there's hikers and bikers and strollers. So I'm so excited about the shared use and everything, thank you.

A: Thank you.

Q: One of my favorite places to ride is Patapsco State Park, and they don't have any paved trailer parking, it's just a grassy field, and it works pretty well, except for when it's really wet. And when you ride you can hear the rifle range just down the road, and the horses are okay with it. They get used to it, they can tune it out eventually.

A: We appreciate your feedback.

Q: I'm a neighbor and I'm also really concerned about the gun range. I want to voice my opposition to that in this facility. We appreciate our rangers, I know they do a lot of good hard work. First of all I'm opposed to it in general, but obviously with kids and hikers and horses don't really seem to mix to me. Is there any opportunity if it does end up getting approved that it could move to a different site? Because our home is really close to that. And even though it's six to eight times a year, it's super disturbing in the world we live in today to hear gunfire when you're sitting on your deck, in the middle of a wooded, peaceful environment. Would there be an opportunity to look for a different site for that if it has to be in this property?

A: We will consider that.

Q: Does anybody know what the gun place is off of Queen Anne Bridge Road? I see that they have something there, right near a cell tower. It looks like a police thing. There's something there already and there's nothing around it. That might be a good place to do that there.

A: Thank you.

Q: This area of the road here has great sight both ways, the whole field is open, the entrance might work better here.

A: A historic site is there, we cannot touch it.

Q: Will the parking lots be open 24 hours a day or do they close at a certain time at night? Currently lots of cars do park there at night.

A: We are evaluating providing a gate at the ranger station that would not allow vehicles past certain times. We're going to be replacing the gravel lot with a paved lot and the entrance will be inside the gated area.

Q: If you are going to be putting in gates, keep in mind that the gates have to be well recessed so that a person showing up with a horse trailer doesn't have to stop and figure out how to turn around.

A: The gate would not block access to the ranger station, so the driveway for the ranger buildings could be used as a turn around.

Q: Could you explain the entrance again? You have a gravel parking lot right there, can you explain what's going to happen there?

A: The existing gravel parking lot will be removed, it will become a field, and we'll need to add a stormwater management facility.

Q: Is that the overflow parking that you're talking about?

A: That is what we are removing. It is a temporary parking lot.

Q: So it's not the one down by the rangers?

A: That's right, that one will be also be removed but will be replaced by a paved parking area. There will be a submerged gravel wetland stormwater management facility where the current one is.

Q: What does storm management facility mean?

A: It is a depression in the ground that treats stormwater, it holds the water from storms.

Q: Like you build a new construction, will there be a fence around it?

A: We probably won't fence them because they are not that deep. Submerged gravel wetlands don't typically require fencing. Drainage comes off the roadway system, we treat it in a facility, it's a very small depression of storage area, only one foot deep, but there's four feet of soil there that's treating it.

Q: Will you be treating it for mosquitos?

A: Anne Arundel County standards for best management practices, we're meeting the requirements for stormwater management, they are doing their purpose for stormwater management.

Q: There's one port-a-potty at the main gravel lot, so when this is all done, can we just have a couple port-a-potties?

A: That's something that we'll definitely be taking back to Rec and Parks and seeing if we can add them.

Q: Can we not use the ranger station [for restrooms]?

A: The ranger station is for the rangers' use only.

Q: You've got busses of kids coming.

A: We appreciate the suggestion for sure.

The question-and-answer session concluded, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM.

## **POST-MEETING COMMENTS AND RESPONSES**

The following comments were received online through the Anne Arundel County website. Responses are provided for each comment.

Q: In the meeting, it was mentioned that the county would be reaching out to hiking and biking groups about allowing horses on the trails. I'm an avid hiker in the area, but am unaware of any hiking advocacy groups. Who do you anticipate reaching out to?

A: Thank you for your input. The Bacon Ridge Natural Area has several facebook groups that the community can reach out to find hiker groups. Annapolis Striders and Scenic Rivers Land Trust are other groups that have interest in Bacon Ridge as well.

Q: Has a noise study been completed for the gun range? The surrounding area is very quiet and this will create nuisance.

A: Thank you for your comments. A noise study has not been performed. Also, DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope.



Q: Is the gun range needed? I understood that the rangers are focused on education and not security? If they need weapons training, there are other in-place facilities for them to use. Removal of the gun range will lower costs, too.

A: Thank you for your comments. After this public meeting, DRP elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope.

Q: Has a traffic study (i.e., trip origin/destination study) been performed to confirm that a 94-space lot is needed? That is a big expense, too.

A: Thank you for your comments. Although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public.

Q: My community is also very concerned with the potential hazards of horse trailers on Severn Chapel Road and the actual need for equestrian facilities.

A: Thank you for your comments. Severn Chapel road is frequently used by busses. Trailers are also permitted to use this road.

Q: What will be done to make Severn Chapel Road safer with this project? It is a dangerous road for cars, cyclists, and even joggers!

A: Thank you for your comments. Although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public.

Q: The County has completely failed to recognize the poor design of this facility and the significant impacts it will create to those that live near the proposed project. Whoever designed the gun range did not look at an aerial map to notice that it was placed within a residential community. Has the designer (planner) ever heard a gun shot in a wooded environment and how the sound carries? The gun range is a significant nuisance to the community and its use will undoubtedly increase once other agencies learn about it. Has the County conducted a noise study to ascertain its affect on the local residences? Is a study even required? If not, I suggest one be conducted. There is no need for a gun range considering the rangers do not carry service weapons. My other major concern is the amount and type of traffic that will now use Severn Chapel Road. I am an avid road cyclist and feel lucky every day I don't get killed on this road. I ride thousands of miles each year and Severn Chapel Road is BY FAR the most dangerous rode for me due to speeds. Now I'll have to contend with more traffic, more buses, more trailers, etc. I am glad the County is catering to the mountain bike folks, but obviously a dead road cyclist is not of concern. Overall, I strongly suggest the County conduct a full traffic study with trip origin and destination data included to confirm whether the 94 space parking lot on the other bus/trailer lot is in fact warranted. I would hope a parking lot that is half the proposed size would suffice. I also strongly recommend removing the gun range. No need for a gun range in a residential community. The noise nuisance will be unacceptable. My preference is to leave the facility intact. Either way, thank you for taking my comments. I would be happy to discuss any of my comments with your design team as the project is developed. Good luck! Bill Geschrei

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: I frequent Bacon Ridge for hiking. I appreciate the quality, variety, and length of the trails available. This area is truly a valuable asset to the area.

This plan is a big step toward addressing the existing inadequate parking. I know it's probably outside the scope of this project, but I would rather see additional parking added at all three trailheads, rather than (or in addition to) 90+ spaces being added at only one.

I hope that great care will be taken to identify which trails are best suited for horse access. I'm not an expert on what constitutes a proper equestrian trail, but I do know that a large part of the reason why the trails are in such excellent condition is because the hiking and biking community exercises great care in staying off the trails when they're wet. With the much higher weight of horses, I fear that riding on trails without adequate soil composition would result in damage to the surface, which would negatively impact the trails for other users. I also have concerns about the health risks that come along with encountering horse droppings on the trail. My two year old son is just starting to get pretty good at hiking, but he still seems to faceplant in the most inconvenient places.

Regarding the other features of the project: I do have my hesitations about the gun range, although I also understand that there is a need for ranger training, and I think the limited use of the facility is something that I could live with. If there are any further considerations that can be taken (location, sound barriers, etc) to hide the gun range any better, that would be appreciated.

Given the size of the parking lot and the possible educational uses (demonstrated by the bus parking), I think adding restroom facilities to this project would be appropriate. Especially as a hiker, I know I could spend hours on these trails, so having restrooms available would be appreciated.

A: Thank you for your comments. Regarding programming changes, those will be determined by the Department of Recreation and Parks. Regarding the ranger training range, DRP elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope. We are also evaluating adding portajohn stations at each parking area.

Q: I am a local and frequent user and enjoy the natural area and using the trails for recreational hiking and biking. I wish the area to leave relatively undeveloped for the wide enjoyment of the public. I am concerned about equestrian use as they require large parking areas and in my experience are hard on trails that is compatible with hiking and biking. Equestrian users represent a narrow and generally wealthy subset of the population generate a disproportionate impact on the trails, facilities and environment. At the same time the equestrian community doesn't tend to volunteer to build and maintain trails, meanwhile hikers, trail runners, and especially bikers show up to organize trail events.

A: Thank you for your comment.

Q: Improvements to local roads would resolve some traffic problems, many bikers that use the trail live close but cannot ride to the trails because the roads are unsafe. Adding lanes and making the parking lots bigger seems like a quick solution to traffic, but the reality is bigger roads often creates worse traffic and the best solution is to reduce driving.

A: Improvements to Severn Chapel road are not currently included in this project. Although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public.

Q: I thought the mountain biking trails at Bacon Ridge would be a great way to get in better physical health and they surprised me with a great benefit to my mental health as well. The proposed plan looks great and well thought out. I hope other types of users are able to coordinate trail work days as well and use the property for all its benefits. May I also suggest considering adding a pump track to the property for bikers to build their riding skills before heading out into the woods. There is an example of a successful one in the private Tanyard Cove community but it is unfortunately private with no other options in Anne Arundel County.

A: Thank you for your comment. Beyond bike racks at the parking areas, no additional cycling facilities are planned with this project.

Q: Per the meeting on 05/03/2023, I'm submitting pictures of the Schooley Mill Park (Howard County) equestrian parking area, as an example of an efficient and safe equestrian parking lot design. Notice that:

- 1) Car and trailer parking are segregated for safety
- 2) Trailer parking spaces are wide enough to tie horses to the side of the trailer and long enough for the truck and trailer WITH the ramp down to unload
- 3) Truck and trailer combinations can enter, pull into a spot, and then exit from that spot without backing up; they can pull through
- 4) There is ample turn-around space around the trailer parking spots for trailers to go around to a better spot if needed, and cars to exit.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the bus and horse trailer parking design.

Q: Regarding the proposed improvements at the Bacon Ridge/Forney property which is adjacent to the road on which I live, I would like you to consider the following:

1. Given the close proximity of the proposed rifle range to the quiet residential neighborhoods surrounding the Bacon Ridge/Forney property I would ask that you drop this proposal from the plan. My understanding is that there are other facilities in the county for the rangers to practice at. If that is not possible, we would need assurances that the use of the range will be limited to a predefined number of hours and only during certain hours of the day. Also, please confirm this proposed range is for the exclusive use of rangers, and no other agencies or clubs.
2. Severn Chapel Rd. is a narrow winding road with several blind corners. My understanding is that the plan will accommodate up to 90 cars. What analysis of traffic has been/will be performed? The greatly increased traffic that the development will bring to the road will not be easily managed. I further understand the plan calls for accommodation for up to 20 horse trailers. Trucks pulling loaded trailers will struggle to exit the property without being broadsided by oncoming traffic speeding through the winding curves of Severn Chapel Rd. You should be very concerned about the ability for large vehicles to enter and exit the property. As it is, we sometimes see cars go off the road into trees with horrific results.
4. In general, the plan seems too ambitious. What are the plans to manage competing interests of hikers, bikers, and equestrians on peak attendance days? How will trail management be handled? In the absence of dedicated trails for each activity, I can foresee accidents and injuries occurring deep in the trails where medical first-response will be difficult to execute. You should be concerned about too many people overwhelming the park with the current plan. Reduce the capacity to one third of the current capacity. At an average of 2 or 3 people per car, that still allows 75 to 100 individuals hiking and biking (plus the equestrians).
5. Will there be night time security? I am very concerned about people entering the park after dark with bad intentions...drinking, drug use and the like Without any security patrol, I can envision a group of young adults partying after dark and then wandering around the park and potentially ending up wandering on to our properties in the middle of the night.

In summary, I favor the idea of developing the area. But a project that is too ambitious may well end up overwhelming the facility and turning what should be a fun day in the outdoors into a disappointing experience at best, or an injury filled day at worst. Sometimes, less is more!"

A: Thank you for your comments. 1) After this public meeting, DRP elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope. 2) Improvements to Seven Chapel Road are not currently included in this project. Although this project does not require a traffic

study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public. 4) Programming will be developed by the Department of Recreation & Parks. 5) Nighttime security is not provided at any of AACo's parks.

Q: Thank you for continuing to invest in open space and nature-based recreation. It is my understanding that the approved and constructed trail system was designed and approved for use by hikers and cyclists, not horses or motorized vehicles. I would like for trail use to remain authorized only for the users for which the trails were designed.

A: Thank you for your input.

Q: I listened to the meeting today and I do hope that there is serious consideration and discussion before allowing equestrian use of the trails that are currently open to mountain bikers and hikers. These trails are narrow and filled with tight turns that could result in unsafe conditions for both mountain bikers and equestrians.

I am also concerned about the impact of horse traffic on the trails which the mountain bike community have built and work to maintain. These trails were not designed for equestrian use and horse traffic could be detrimental to their future use and sustainability.

Has the equestrian community submitted a plan for building and maintaining equestrian trails through the park or is the plan to open the mountain biking/hiking trails for equestrian use. If so, is this plan available somewhere to review?

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: It is time to start providing solar-charged cameras at park entrances and parking areas for purpose of collecting evidence in cases of vandalism, car break-ins, theft, dumping, or more serious crimes such as robbery/rape, or burying bodies as in the case of MS13 activities at Bacon Ridge and Quiet Waters parks.

A: Thank you for your input.

Q: Regarding water for the horses, and per the 05/03/2023 meeting:

- 1) Please do not install water troughs; this is a biosecurity risk for horses and other species that could lead to zoonotic diseases
- 2) One or more (ideally more) freeze-free water spigots with lines going down below the freeze line, are sufficient, as horse owners will bring their own buckets
- 3) Incredible would be to have a couple of simple wash stalls with drainage around for the water to drain! With climate change advancing, horses are getting overheated quicker in the summer. Thinking of their health and providing an option to cool them down before going back into a trailer would be fantastic! Please, if possible? It need not be a huge expense. See the attached photo to show that a simple gravel pad with three sides of rail barriers would be sufficient. We could even have the equestrian community put it in if a space is allocated by the water spigots. Equestrians will bring their own hoses.

A: Thank you for your input. We intend to put only a hose bib in for the equestrian users who will need to bring their own buckets for water horses. Equestrian amenities other than what is currently planned (parking, water) are not included in this project.

Q: Equestrian trail design standards preclude equestrian use on narrow, singletrack trails as built at Bacon Ridge Natural Area. Please do not allow equestrian use of narrow trails as their impact will

destroy the trails. Human-powered trail standards do not fit with equestrian use at BRNA.  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/htm07232816/page07.htm#clear>

A: Thank you for your comment.

Q: Our property borders the Bacon Ridge Natural Area on two sides. People and bikes are currently riding along the left side of our property in the open field and then along the back of our property where our woods backs up directly to the wooded trails. I am very concerned about the crowded trails and bike traffic = and dogs often not on leashes coming into my yard. Although we have a fence around our pool, the bulk of our yard is unfenced = so we are very concerned about the safety of both our family and our dog. Also, the gun range will be in extremely close proximity to our home and while we purchased a more expensive lot due to its remote location and peaceful quiet, we will bear the brunt of the loud shots while outside trying to enjoy our yard and pool. Any gunshots would ruin the quiet serenity that brought us to this area and inspired us to build on our property in the first place. We are hoping that the rangers can continue to use the range that they already have in place as opposed to placing a new one in our backyard and the backyard of our neighborhood. Although it was suggested that the rangers would only use the range on a limited schedule, there would be nothing to prevent others from filling in the open times at the range as it would be a county asset. As for the suggested horse trails, there would not be sufficient space for the width of the trails necessary for the safety of both the horses and the bike and foot traffic + the entryway into the Bacon Ridge Park off of Severn Chapel Rd. is right at a windy blind turn and could not handle the size and turning radius of the horse trailers without impeding traffic along the road. The winding country road that Bacon Ridge Park was built to accommodate the residential properties along it and not a commercial entity with the level of traffic that it would draw by expanding parking and participation. Thank you for your understanding and concern for our peaceful neighborhood and also our property values to be adjacent to such a busy commercial entity.

A: Thank you for your comments. The ranger training range is being removed from this project. While improvements to Severn Chapel Road are not currently included as part of this project, we plan to perform a traffic study to evaluate the input from the public.

Q: Thank you for the meeting and for including horseback riding in your plans for this park. My suggestions would be to change the trailer parking plan to include pull through slots that are twice the size in width already planned. We tie horses to the sides of our trailers. No need for hitching post. We don't do that. Just one spicket would be fine so we can fill our buckets. We don't use communal troughs. A porta potty would be great! Thank you so much

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking configurations.

Q: Adding horse involvement (trail riding, special horse events, horse club activities and more) has proven to be amazing for the community at other state parks. Since Bacon Ridge is so close to me and other equestrians, we are looking forward to the possibility of including horses at Bacon Ridge. Equestrians are generally nature conscious and would be a fabulous addition.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: I am very pleased that you are providing horse trailer parking at Bacon Ridge. I attended the meeting at Crofton Library and saw proposed plans for this parking area that don't really provide appropriate parking for the way trailers are used in real life. One doesn't off-load horses at a hitching post and then go park the trailer in tightly spaced parking slots. Please revise these plans to provide for pull

through parking with adequate space for larger (4-horse) trailers, enough space to unload horses from the side or the rear (not directly in the path of incoming traffic, space to tie off horses on the side of the trailer. Also a communal water trough is not good from a health standpoint. Better to provide a spigot from which people can fill their own bucket. Combining horse trailer parking with school bus parking also seems unsafe. In general, a larger and much less formal (and less expensive to build) parking area would be better suited to trailers and horses than the landscaped, manicured and tightly spaced parking in the current plans. Thank you for your efforts.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking configurations and plan only to provide a hose bib for horse watering.

Q: · Equestrian Parking: The designated parking area as currently designed is too tight of a space for safe horse trailer parking. The current spaces would not allow for horses to be safely tied to the side of a trailer, as is customary equestrian practice. There needs to be at least 20 feet of space in between trailers. A pull-through parking option would be much safer and easier to navigate. Please refer to the current equestrian parking lot at Schooley Mill as a guide. Lastly, there does not seem to be enough room for horses to safely unload from a trailer. As designed horses would be unloaded into the single drive/travel lane. There needs to be an additional 20 feet behind the 55-foot trailer/truck length, without intruding on travel space. Then there needs to be room to pull out.

· Hitching Post: Equestrians will not use a hitching post. We tie our horses to the trailer because our equipment is stored in our trailer. It is extra work to move the horse and then carry the equipment to the horse. That is why we keep the trailer, horse, and equipment all near each other. Additionally, while we move equipment back and forth, we would be leaving the horse unsupervised and alone which is a hazard to the horse and to park visitors.

· A joint water trough presents a biological hazard for the animals. A water spigot would suffice for us to fill our own water containers.

· Landscaping: The decorative trees around the parking lot will be damaged by tall truck-trailers and buses. Decorative landscaping should be flat with no rocks that can injury a horse who steps on them.

· Turning Radius: Please be sure that all corners and turns are wide and provide for flat, roll-over/soft curbs. Parking will get tight in accordance with the park's planned usage.

· Entrance: Trailers and busses require a large turning radius and currently would have to turn into oncoming traffic to make a safe turn onto the roadway.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking configurations and plan only to provide a hose bib for horse watering. No curbs except as needed for stormwater management are planned.

Q: Please require the equestrian community to stay on the existing farm roads, and/or build trails that suit their needs, just like the mountain bikers did, so the horses don't damage the amazing trail network we now have. It sounds like there is plenty of acreage available for equestrians to design and maintain their own

The existing trails were hand-built singletrack trails with the hikers, runners, birders, scouts, families, and bike riders who use them, and they were not designed with equestrian use in mind.

From what I know, none of the an equestrian group showed up to help build the existing trails. Also equestrians are known for not respecting wet trail avoidance advice, cleaning up poop and thereby creating damage.

The mountain bike community is primarily responsible for the existence of the Bacon Ridge trail system, and they self-police along with their friends in the running and hiking community (as seen in the Friends of Bacon Ridge and Waterworks Facebook group). The equestrian community has contributed nothing to the project.

In conclusion

Please require the equestrian community to stay on the existing farm roads and/or build a trail network that suits their needs, just like the mountain bikers did. If the equestrians do that, I will be very willing to support their special parking lot.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I am very excited about this project. I would like to suggest a different type of parking though. With horse trailering, the best type of parking is pull-through. This will allow it to be easy and won't cause delays with people trying to back out. Believe me, you don't want that! Also, the spots need to be wide enough to tie your horse to the side of the trailer.. Also, no need for troughs, a spigot or two would be perfect. Consideration for a small area for manure too. People will likely muck their trailers out before they put their horses on them to go back home. Please refer to Schooley Mills for a great example. Thanks Again.

A: We are evaluating the parking design. Thank you for your comments.

Q: To be blunt, there is a large group of the equestrian community who are doing nothing but trying to use strength in numbers to try and bully their way into getting access to somewhere that they \*objectively\* did nothing in terms of getting this area into the incredible place that it currently is. There is a time and a place for true multi-use trails where hikers/bikers/runners/horses can all use the same area... but this is not that. Creating this area for trailer parking will without a doubt soon lead to equestrian access on this trail system for the simple reason that it makes VERY little sense to have trailer parking there UNLESS there is increased access made available. And based on how the community has tried to bombard their way into making this about them, it is all but guaranteed that this is what will happen next.

In summary, it is wildly disrespectful to all of those who have put in countless efforts into getting this area to where it is... only to then let those who have contributed absolutely nothing push their way in and potentially ruin what makes this area so great. Think of it on the flip side. If there was an area that the horse community built up all on their own and then had others (bikers specifically) make a push to invite themselves into that area.... I can say with 120% confidence that there are no words that could predict the utter outrage that would come from the equestrian community. Please acknowledge the hypocrisy. Thank you.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: Good Morning, I have heard that horses are being considered to use the existing trails at Bacon Ridge. For background I mountain biker and hike but also own horses and have a wife and daughter who ride and love it. I have talked to my wife and she thinks it is a awful idea for horses to trail ride on the preexisting single track. Mainly because the trails are not designed for horses but also what's going to happen when a mountain biker comes around a blind corner traveling at a fast speed? It will be very dangerous for all involved. The trails are too narrow and there is no where for the horse to go. I believe it would be a disaster if horses were allowed on the trails and also destroy the trails as has happened with other trail systems not specifically designed for horses. That being said I am all for new horse trails on the property that are designed for horses as I would enjoy a horse trail ride with my family but I believe it's a awful idea to have horses on the existing trails.

Thank you for your time!

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: Thank you for your time and attention considering my comments.

I've been an Anne Arundel County resident since 2007. As an avid cyclist, hiker and trail runner who has invested a lot of volunteer time in building and maintaining our Anne Arundel County trails over the better part of a decade, I want to see this amazing resource continue to remain sustainable for the uses originally intended. I began building these trails with many others back in 2015 prior to the birth of my son and want him to be able to share the trails in similar condition for years to come. On the one hand, as it should be, the proposed improvements and changes to the Forney Road access area of Bacon Ridge and ranger station have seen engineering assessment and planned accommodations for proper support of the necessary pavement, submerged gravel wetlands runoff basins and so on, to minimize the impact the proposed changes have on the land, adjacent roads, waterways and habitats. That's great.

On the other hand, the metaphorical cart is truly being put before the horse in regards to planning for a financially and physically significant set of infrastructure accommodations for parking for a significant quantity of horse trailers. Why? Because unlike the carefully laid out and engineered plans for the parking proposed, the mere concept of utilizing our trail system for horses has not even been slightly held to the standards of engineering and environmental concerns. Only the existing farm roads would appropriately serve for the needs of supporting the weight, height, and erosion mitigation concerns faced by equestrian use. Any additional usage would require planning and construction of alternate trails for this purpose.

Our trails were carefully planned and hand built for the sustainable use of pedestrian and cycling traffic and these singletrack (one bike or hiker wide) trails feature many tight bends necessarily to maintain an appropriate slope for these uses with the given soil, drainage and vegetation in our area. Regarding drainage, not only is sediment runoff a serious concern, many of our trails, by nature of the areas topography, are highly proximate to drainage channels and the inevitable horse dung runoff. In discussing the matter of equestrians picking up after their horses, we agreed that many do this at the parking areas but none of us have ever witnessed this in the trails in areas where access is allowed to horses. I would support the idea of horse users on trails in the county-so long as those trails were separately planned, built and maintained with innumerable volunteer hours of equestrian stakeholders over a period of nearly 9 years just like the existing approved trail users, cyclists and pedestrians. It is deeply worrisome to me that equestrians seem to feel they have cart blanche for trail usage as soon as a parking lot exists in proximity when this is not the case. And yet the recent meeting was intentionally focused only on the support infrastructure aspect of the property, not the suitability of the site for that usage.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: There really aren't many places to ride in AACO. Rosaryville State Park in PG is amazing but it's very large and very busy so it's not a place I would take our newer horse who isn't as experienced. Kinder Park is very small and doesn't allow for a ride that justifies the effort to load the horse in the trailer and drive up to Severna Park. I like Jug Bay but the trails aren't always well-kept. The North Tract Patuxent in Laurel is quiet and the place I feel most comfortable. It's also 45 minutes away. I was very excited to hear that Bacon Ridge would be putting in a place for horse trailers because that meant to me that they would assign some trails to horseback riders. This would provide a good sized area for me and my horsey friends to ride in. It could also serve the neighboring Crownsville farms like Abington (where I used to board my horses) which have arenas but no trails. Trails are like gold to equestrians. They teach horses to be brave, to cross streams, to deal with bikes, and gives them the exercise they need. This is especially important for my two who live on a smaller pasture.



Thank you for any help you can give to those of us who love to ride!!!

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: If horse traffic is to be allowed on the current single track trails, that were hand built with back breaking love and labor by volunteers, a couple of things need to be taken in to consideration. Horses are damaging to trail tread, especially on soft soils and steep slopes, especially if equestrians take them out when the trails are wet. The hoof prints leave holes and tear and break up the soil. The current bridges and boardwalks, that were hand built, by volunteers, are not built to sustain horse traffic, as horses were not allowed on the trails, they were built with foot and bike traffic in mind. Horses will break them and some horses may not be willing to use them at all, which will have them crossing through wetland areas and streams and damaging them. Will AA County and the equestrian community fund and rebuild the bridges and boardwalks to handle horse traffic?

Another thing to take in to consideration is the current trail traffic, which is mostly mountain bikers, trail runners, and hikers. Adding horses to the mix has the potential to cause some serious trail user conflict, especially on steep and/or narrow trail sections.

My recommendation is to limit equestrian traffic to areas that are less used like farm trails, old roads, and old trails and keep horses separated from regular single track trail traffic. I know equestrians will say that they have no problems with other users in other trail areas but that is because every other user has to get out of their way so as to not spook their horses.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: Thank you for your work to improve the Forney property for multiple park users. Regarding the equestrian parking lot pull through spaces at least 20 feet wide allow for safe handling of trailers and horses. Minimal or no curbs, trees, etc to negotiate around please. Please also allow for a turn lane into and out of the park so trucks with trailers can safely turn in and out at slow speeds. Segregating school bus parking from equestrian use parking would be safer for children and horses.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking design.

Q: I'm not a huge mountain biker, but I do occasionally visit the Bacon Ridge trails. My experience with horseback riders in my neighborhood is that they have no concern for wet trails and the damage they do to them, no concern for the leaving horse dung on the trails and on our neighborhood roads (where we walk, since we don't have sidewalks), and they put holes in people's front yards.

The lack of concern for anyone else displayed by horseback riders makes me extremely nervous that allowing horses on Bacon Ridge would turn the trails into a poor experience for everyone else.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: The bacon ridge trail network was built by cyclists, runners and hikers, FOR cyclists, runners and hikers.

To allow horses on the trails would destroy this precious resource, as well as create an environmental mess at the head waters of a major tributary. There is plenty of land that the equestrian community could develop and build their own trail network and parking areas. There are also safety concerns with horses sharing the same trails and cyclist and hikers. Many hikers also have dogs with them on the trails that could create issues in passing

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: These are purpose built mountain bike trails finally brought into existence by the tireless efforts of the mountain bike community coordinating with local government. I suggest that if the equine

community wants trails for horses they could have volunteers work on separate trails on the property. That way the horses wouldn't disrupt the mountain bike trails and the horses could have trails suitable for horses and maintained by that community. The bikers wouldn't have to worry about scaring a horse inadvertently or having the trail tread churned up by hooves or dealing with horse droppings on the trail. Horse riders could relax not having to control their animals around bikes and have trails suitable for horses and possible bridges could be built by them to support the weight of horses

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: Parking: Parking MUST be pull-through parking. Please leave room for unloading behind trailers and space in-between trailers for horses. See other local parks for examples, such as Rosaryville State Park.

Hitching post: This, unfortunately, demonstrates the designers are NOT in tune with their audience. Common practice is to tie horses to the trailers because that is where all the equipment is located. Walking a horse to a hitching station, then walking away from a 1000lb animal to retrieve equipment, is dangerous. Keeping the horse, trailer, equipment, and rider all close together is optimal and common practice. Nobody will use a hitching station.

Again, a water trough demonstrates a disconnect between design and the audience. Would a human drink from a common bowl that everyone in the public drinks from? No. Neither should horses--that is how disease spreads. A spigot is fine. It is the difference between a human punch bowl that everyone dips their head into and a water fountain.

Please make sure curbs are 'soft' so that they and trailers are not damaged when we roll over them---and we will. To limit this, make sure there is adequate turning radii on roadways AND at the entrance/exit.

Keep in mind that trailers will hit trees that are too close or low to parking areas. Keep landscaping back and PLEASE do NOT use reclaimed stone etc. Any kinds of crushed gravel should be comfortable for barefoot horses. That means even and flat."

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking design.

Q: I want to start by stating my 100% opposition to the gun range. The proposed location is very close to our house, and our neighbors, and this will have a big negative impact on our quality of life and property values (who will want to buy a house with a gun range in the back). I am really dismayed that our county government would do this to us. I also want to state that I strongly support the Rangers, they have a tough job and do it well, but I do not want them shooting guns in Bacon Ridge Park. The idea in general of a gun range in a park doesn't make sense.

I also request that you extend the comment period. Two weeks is not enough time for the word to get out and citizens to comment.

Regarding the gun range:

1. Where do the Rangers currently practice? I attended the meeting at Crofton library on May 3 and have some follow up questions, these are based on my notes and are not an exact transcript. The question was asked "Have you explored the option of continuing using the current practice gun range" and the answer was "not really".

a. What is the duration of the current arrangement?

b. Why hasn't the option of using the current facility been thoroughly researched?

c. Why spend taxpayer dollars to build a gun range that is redundant?

d. Who determines how the County and Ranger's gun range options are defined and analyzed?

2. An audience member pointed out that the Anne Arundel County Police are building a gun range in Davidsonville and that could be used by the Rangers.

- a. Is this true?
- b. If it is true, then why not use it and save the tax expenditures and negative impact on County residents that live near and use Bacon Ridge Park?
- 3. Why was the location so near a residential neighborhood selected instead of somewhere in the park farther from any houses?
  - a. What other locations were considered?
  - b. Who made the decision to put it in the planned location near residences?
- 4. I am not familiar with the working of the County government. What person or persons will make the final decision on the gun range. Please be specific and provide contact information (phone number and email) and the timeline.
  - a. What is the process to make the go or no-go decision?
- 5. If the shoe was on the other foot and the County was putting the gun range behind where you live, what steps would you take to stop it? Please be specific.

In closing, as a taxpayer and County citizen (and I always vote) I am completely opposed to the gun range in Bacon Ridge/Forney Park. Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments and I look forward to a detailed reply.

A: Thank you for your comments. DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope.

Q: I am very much in favor of allowing horses and riders to use this facility. AA County needs to include the use of horses in more public spaces.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: The current trails have been painstakingly planned and hand-built for the sustainable use of pedestrian and cycling traffic. These single-lane (one bike or hiker wide) trails are tight with many blind corners and off-camber sections that are simply not conducive to horse traffic. There are also many boardwalks and bridges that will not support the weight of a horse, potentially meaning horseback riders will go off-trail and around them into sensitive land areas.

I would support the idea of equestrians on existing farm roads in the county and the creation of new sustainable horse trails as long as they were planned and maintained with the same care as the existing trails built by the mountain bike community. This includes respecting wet trail avoidance advice to minimize damage to existing farm road trails and any new trails that are planned for equestrian traffic.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I have lived in Annapolis for most of the last 21 years, and I've also been an avid user, fan, and contributor to the Bacon Ridge trails. I read the available information about the Forney project, listened carefully to the recording of the public meeting on May 3, and I am left with serious concerns related to the horse trailer parking lot and the shared trail use that would include horses. The remainder of my response will provide support for my views, but the main conclusion is this:

Please require the equestrian community to stay on the existing farm roads, and/or build trails that suit their needs, just like the mountain bikers did, so the horses don't damage the amazing resource we now have. It sounds like there is plenty of acreage available. The equestrian community should also begin to join us in the effort to expand into the Crownsville Hospital property, and could even start to help to maintain the 20 miles of trail we already have. They have been totally absent from the years of effort so far.

Putting the cart before the horses

Of course, shared trail use was beyond the scope set for the meeting. But it's extremely important, so we should address it now. Somehow we have arrived at a point where an enthusiastic equestrian crowd showed up, seemingly assuming they will have access to the hand built singletrack trail. Yet no one has gathered all the user groups to discuss any of the associated issues. Presumably, after parking their trailers in the new lot, the equestrians would like to ride their horses somewhere. It seems like figuring out a place for them to go should have been a critical part of the initial planning, not something to consider after major infrastructure like this has been presented.

It took over 15 years for the Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE) to overcome all of the objections and gain access to Bacon Ridge. I don't think there should already be a plan to build a special horse trailer parking lot before we have a conversation about where the horses are supposed to go. I believe that it's absolutely essential to reach an agreement about sustainable trail access before this project begins.

On sharing the singletrack trails with horses

The equestrian crowd was very excited to share the all-volunteer, hand-built singletrack trails with the hikers, runners, birders, scouts, families, and bike riders who built them, and they seem to anticipate no issues with this. From my three decades of experience, I believe there are problems with a few things the equestrians said. Notably: 1) that most trails in the state are multi-use, so horses on the singletrack won't be a problem; 2) that there is established trail etiquette everyone follows, so sharing won't present a challenge; and 3) that they are used to taking their waste with them, so we don't need to worry about encountering piles of poo.

1) Areas known for the most successful mountain biking/hiking/running and horse activities keep them on separate trails, since their needs and impact are very different. See the Santos trail system in Ocala, FL for the best example I've ridden. That's horse country with an active mountain bike community and it all seems to work well. Hikers actually have their own trails there, but here the bikers and the folks on foot coexist quite well, so we don't need that.

<https://www.santosbikeshop.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Santos-Map-Front.pdf>

2) Equestrians are likely to be fans of the established trail sharing etiquette, because the rule is that everyone yields to horses. Of course they have no objections. But in my years of trail work at a few different networks in MD, VA, and WV, I have never seen or heard of an equestrian group showing up to help...despite equestrians being known for not respecting wet trail avoidance advice and thereby creating damage.

The mountain bike community is primarily responsible for the existence of the Bacon Ridge trail system, and they self-police along with their friends in the running and hiking community (as seen in the Friends of Bacon Ridge and Waterworks Facebook group). The equestrian community has contributed nothing to the project. One of them even posted misleading and needlessly inflammatory information in an announcement about the public meeting (see my post about it from 4/28 at 10:26am). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/652330788289748/>

3) As for equestrians being accustomed to removing their excrement, just look at the comments under my post for a few counter examples. I didn't bother to pile on, even though I've done the "poo jump" several times at Patapsco. I can only speak from my own personal experience, but that's just as valid as anything stated in the public meeting. There was no serious analysis, data, or study cited.

Monetary contributions to Bacon Ridge

On a personal level, I have to admit it was aggravating to hear one of the commenters laughing as they jokingly asked if there was a donation box. Most people don't realize that a) trail networks don't create themselves and b) trails are natural systems, so they require a lot of time and effort to maintain. Downed trees, general overgrowth, natural erosion, all of these things require equipment

to address. Several of us have already been donating our own money for years in the course of working to maintain the trails.

But I certainly appreciate the intent of the question, and I wish more people would think to ask. For anyone who would like to contribute, we have MORE, the organization that worked so hard to gain permission from the county, to organize the volunteers, who would eventually go on to build the great public resource we are talking about now: <https://more-mtb.org/collections/maryland-trails/products/bacon-ridge>. There is also an app called LuvTrails where people can donate. And yes, there are parks that use a simple donation box. Every contribution is appreciated.

In conclusion

I believe that it's absolutely essential to reach agreement about sustainable trail access before this project begins. Please require the equestrian community to stay on the existing farm roads and/or build a trail network that suits their needs, just like the mountain bikers did. If the equestrians do that, I will be very willing to support their special parking lot.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I know there have been many comments from the hiker / runner / mountain biking community, and so I won't duplicate what they have already written.

I want to add my voice to those who have expressed concern over the damage that would be created by horse traffic on the single track trails. Many of us have invested a great deal of our money and labor to build and maintain these trails, and we don't want to see them destroyed the way that horse traffic has destroyed similar trails throughout the US.

By no means am I suggesting that horses shouldn't use the LAND, though. I think Bacon Ridge is a wonderful resource, and now that the equestrian community is engaged, perhaps they would be willing to spearhead efforts to develop horse-friendly trails (like the existing carriage / farm trails that run throughout the area, but bikers don't generally use). There is plenty of land available in Bacon Ridge - including the Crownsville Hospital property - which would work very well for horse-friendly trails, and I believe that many in the hiker / runner / mountain biker community would even volunteer to help build those trails as well, because - let's face it - more trails for everyone would be awesome!!!

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to offer my support for the preservation of the single track and for the development of horse-friendly trails throughout the BRNA.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: As a long time hiker, biker and member of MORE who actually helped fund and build (digging/benching) the trails at Bacon Ridge and Waterworks I have concerns about the likely equestrian use of trails carefully designed for and used for foot and bike traffic. While I agree that equestrians need more places to ride, I fear the grave impact of hooves (and poop) on purpose-built single track.

They should be allowed on the double-track / farm roads and trails only.

Also, with such a large parking facility and encouraging trailers, there should be a condition-related red/yellow/green indicator like at the Waterworks Hauser Road trailhead, and horses should not be allowed under anything but Green, and this should be posted online and enforced. ATVs and motorized dirt bikes will need to be policed as well.

I'm general, bikers self regulate by avoiding riding in muddy conditions, as witnessed on the friends of Bacon Ridge Facebook group, and from public awareness campaigns and signage from MORE. I have never seen the same from equestrian groups on multi-use trails. It matters not for exclusively

equestrian trials, of course, but a hoof torn up surface that then hardens becomes hazardous for bikers and hikers and trail runners especially.

I just did a hike at Liberty reservoir, and the trail surface was torn up in places by horse tracks, with no footprints or tire tracks to be seen. Plus there are separate surface water run-off and erosion concerns.

In addition to impact / sustainability concerns that have been unstudied, there is also an equity issue. Where were the equestrians when the system was being built? Where is their financial or sweat equity input?

I come all the way to Bacon Ridge from northern Baltimore county. As of now it is a worthy destination. In addition to volunteering, I bring my money to local shops and eateries. I do not want to see this gem ruined by lack of planning for consequences of equestrian impacts.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I live on Maud Lane. As you know Maud Lane borders the Bacon Ridge property on the west.

I encourage any improvements that supports the Rangers ability to accomplish their state and county role and engage with citizens especially school age children. Any additional ranger and park visitor parking, equipment storage and educational facilities seem like a reasonable tax payer expense.

I encourage the reasonable and proper use of the natural area specifically the mountain bike and hiking trails. The MTB community expended hundreds of volunteer man-hours building miles of challenging mountain bike specific trails.

Unfortunately none of these manmade trails are suitable for use by horses. In accordance with state and federal regulations mandating the requirements for dual use (bicycle and horses) of the current trail system would destroy the mountain bike trails. To make the trails legal for horses would cost an enormous amount of tax dollars which I don't believe is a reasonable expense. Currently equestrians have access to no less than six authorized public spaces to ride in AA County. Bacon Ridge is the only mountain bike specific park.

The current plan for the 22 spot horse trailer parking should be modified to support buses. The number of spots can be reduced by a half with 10 lanes in the middle of the lot. The spots would be positioned to provide drive in/drive out without having to back up. There should be no requirements for horse support.

I would like to see some portable toilets and trash cans for use by park goers. Potentially a few picnic tables could provide a place for clubs and groups to meet before or after events.

With regard to the proposed 100 yard rifle Range I find this investment for 6-8 rangers to use for 6-8 hours per year as an unreasonable and unjustified expense. The Rangers need a range to confirm zero and maintain marksmanship for a few native deer herd cull hunts during hunting season.

Currently, Rangers successfully conduct this training at other county facilities.

Beyond the enormous cost to the tax payer and the natural area for a very rarely used facility the range would very close to a neighborhood, approximately 300 yards from one home. Additionally the range is surrounded by recreational trails with bikers and hikers. Many of the residents find the range concept as dangerous and unnecessary. Additionally, it's more likely that other AA County agencies that have marksmanship requirements would be constantly on the range. It seems unrealistic to think that the range would sit unused. Once that exception is made the Maud lane residents would be subjected to constant range noise significantly impacting quality of life and property values.

I believe the biggest issue with the expansion of the Bacon Ridge area is the entrance to the natural area. Currently the parking situation supports probably half of the proposed 92 car and none of the proposed 22 truck/bus spots. Folks who live along Severn Chapel road are quite familiar with the narrow, undulating curvy road that is Severn Chapel. The entrance to the park could be considered a

hidden driveway. Approaching from the east the entrance is very close to a curve and very narrow. There is no safety zone on either side of the road. Nor is there any way to know a bus or large horse trailer is pulling out onto Severn Chapel road. Recently I had to stop in a dangerous part of the curve to allow a AA County pickup pulling a trailer pull out because he was halfway out into the opposite lane. It's not the drivers fault the entrance and road is just too narrow. Currently, the plan is to move the entrance approximately 20-30 feet to the west limited by a natural easement. This improvement will not improve approach visibility from either direction. The entrance to the natural area will have to be large enough to allow large vehicle to merge onto Severn Chapel from the entrance. The proposed parking improvements, effectively tripling the current parking will significantly increase traffic to and in and out of the natural area. Consider a busy weekend with the parking lot turning over 2 or three times then add some trailers or buses potentially adding 200-300 cars that would not normally use the natural area, Considering poor driving habits the entrance to the park will not be safe and will be an unnecessary source of traffic accidents.

#### Priorities

1. Maintain the natural in the natural area. Prevent overuse
  2. Eliminate the range. Seems like an exorbitant and unjustified expense not only to the taxpayer but the natural area itself. The Rangers successfully utilize other county facilities. The range will be a real problem for residents living around the park and patrons of the park.
  3. Significantly improve the entrance to the natural area to provide safe access for visitors and normal traffic along Severn Chapel Rd. If you cannot improve access to the natural area you may need to reconsider the number of parking spots. If you build it they will come. In this case creating traffic and safety issues. I feel like the entrance will be very expensive but should be the top priority. The area is a wonderful county asset that should be enjoyed as it is now.
  4. Protect the efforts of the mountain bike community. To believe that equestrians would come in and simply convert the natural area to a dual use area is unrealistic and considering the construction requirements frankly lacks consideration for the natural area as it sits.
  5. Reconfigure the current truck/trailer parking lot to allow for one way in and out without backing up. Reduce the spots to 10 bus spots although 10 seems excessive. 10 buses of children at one time would be a lot for the area to support with 90 plus bikers and hikers.
  6. Add some portable toilets, trash cans and possibly a few picnic tables adjacent to the car parking lot.
  7. With regards to dual use trails I don't believe adding dual use trails to this natural area is a prudent or justified expense. The availability of trailer parking should not be a reason to turn a natural area into a manmade area. Having read the federal regulations governing legal horse trails the equipment needed to construct the trails is significant (bulldozers). The only area where horse trails may possibly be acceptable is along the short perimeter of the small open areas, but even with that there are places where it's steep wet and muddy, unsuitable for horses. Constructing horse trails or converting current bike trails would come at a steep price to taxpayer as major modifications would have to be done to account for drainage, elevation and most importantly trees. In the end the natural area will suffer. The introduction of mountain bikes on this property has not negatively impacted the natural area itself.
- A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the addition of portable toilets at each parking area. DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope. The entrance design into the park is being evaluated by the Traffic group and we are adding a traffic study to this project in order to evaluate the input from the public. The Department of Recreation and Parks will be evaluating the programming for this park.

Q: · Equestrian Parking: The designated parking area as currently designed is too tight of a space for safe horse trailer parking. The current spaces would not allow for horses to be safely tied to the side of a trailer, as is customary equestrian practice. There needs to be at least 20 feet of space between trailers. A pull-through parking option would be much safer and easier to navigate. Please refer to the current equestrian parking lot at Schooley Mill as a guide. Lastly, there does not seem to be enough room for horses to safely unload from a trailer. As designed horses would be unloaded into the single drive/travel lane. There needs to be an additional 20 feet behind the 55-foot trailer/truck length, without intruding on travel space. Then there needs to be room to pull out.

- Hitching Post: Equestrians will not use a hitching post. We tie our horses to the trailer because our equipment is stored in our trailer. It is extra work to move the horse and then carry the equipment to the horse. That is why we keep the trailer, horse, and equipment all near each other. Additionally, while we move equipment back and forth, we would be leaving the horse unsupervised and alone which is a hazard to the horse and to park visitors.
- A joint water trough presents a biological hazard for the animals. A water spigot would suffice for us to fill our own water containers.
- Landscaping: The decorative trees around the parking lot will be damaged by tall truck-trailers and buses. Decorative landscaping should be flat with no rocks that can injure a horse who steps on them.
- Turning Radius: Please be sure that all corners and turns are wide and provide for flat, roll-over/soft curbs. Parking will get tight in accordance with the park's planned usage.
- Entrance: Trailers and busses require a large turning radius and currently would have to turn into oncoming traffic to make a safe turn onto the roadway.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking area and entrance designs.

Q: Hello, I travel from outside the county to visit the trail system. As I understand the current situation equestrian access should be clarified first before adding equestrian amenities. I enjoy mountain biking on these trails. I do have questions about allowing access to equestrians. Is the trail design and trail tread appropriate for equestrians use? Has there been an environmental assessment to validate the impact of equestrians on the soil type on the trails? These things should be assessed before equestrians are allowed access.

Maybe the county can work with the equestrians to find other suitable land to construct an equestrian only trail system. Then invite the equestrian community to fund raise, advocate and build their own trails. Just like what was done with the mountain bike and hiker community did with Bacon ridge and water works.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I have been to the Baconridge and Waterworks trails a number of times mountain biking and hiking. They are a great example of what can be done when both the county and an organizations such as MORE invest years of studies, planning, and hard working volunteering to arrive at the amazing trail system that we have today. I am not opposed to equestrian use of the area, but perhaps some of the previous studies can be used to determine if the area is suitable for equestrian use before large parking lots to accommodate them are built. If not, then perhaps additional studies would be necessary to determine the best ways in which use of the land could potentially be shared among all interested users. Simply opening up the existing trail system for equestrian use would seem quite short sighted as the current trail system was not designed with equestrian use in mind. It would likely create dangerous situations for both equestrian users as well as the mountain biking, hiking, trail running, birding and other current users. I can think of a number of narrow sections, steep pitches, blind corners, etc. Please take the time and effort to consider how and if it would be possible to



accommodate equestrian use here. Otherwise you will almost certainly end up with a bad situation in what is currently a great place to recreate in Anne Arundal county.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: · Equestrian Parking: The designated parking area as currently designed is too tight of a space for safe horse trailer parking. The current spaces would not allow for horses to be safely tied to the side of a trailer, as is customary equestrian practice. There needs to be at least 20 feet of space between trailers. A pull-through parking option would be much safer and easier to navigate. Please refer to the current equestrian parking lot at Schooley Mill as a guide. Lastly, there does not seem to be enough room for horses to safely unload from a trailer. As designed horses would be unloaded into the single drive/travel lane. There needs to be an additional 20 feet behind the 55-foot trailer/truck length, without intruding on travel space. Then there needs to be room to pull out.

- Hitching Post: Equestrians will not use a hitching post. We tie our horses to the trailer because our equipment is stored in our trailer. It is extra work to move the horse and then carry the equipment to the horse. That is why we keep the trailer, horse, and equipment all near each other. Additionally, while we move equipment back and forth, we would be leaving the horse unsupervised and alone which is a hazard to the horse and to park visitors.

- A joint water trough presents a biological hazard for the animals. A water spigot would suffice for us to fill our own water containers.

- Landscaping: The decorative trees around the parking lot will be damaged by tall truck-trailers and buses. Decorative landscaping should be flat with no rocks that can injure a horse who steps on them.

- Turning Radius: Please be sure that all corners and turns are wide and provide for flat, roll-over/soft curbs. Parking will get tight in accordance with the park's planned usage.

- Entrance: Trailers and busses require a large turning radius and currently would have to turn into oncoming traffic to make a safe turn onto the roadway.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking design.

Q: I think it would be great to share this area with equestrians but I have major concerns about being on the same trails that were built and maintained by the mountain bike and hiking/running community. I live on the eastern shore and have lots of first hand experience from riding at Tuckahoe. The issues I have observed are mostly damage to the trails from the weight and number of horses and that no matter what anyone says the manure does not get picked up. I've had many times that there was so much manure on the trail that it's been unavoidable and I've had it all over myself and my bike. The other issue is that the trails are now so rough and bumpy from horse hoofs that it is like riding on a rumble strip on the highway now, they have completely destroyed the trails. I mostly ride only at Bacon ridge now due to the conditions at Tuckahoe caused by horses. My point is that it would be great to open this area to everyone but there will need to be equestrian specific trails built to support this and until that happens I'm not sure why we would build a special parking lot or anything else. They need somewhere to ride first.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: Thank you for including the Anne Arundel County equestrian community in your plans for the proposed development of the Bacon Ridge Natural Area & Forney Park. I attended the meeting on May 3rd. Below you will find my input:

- Equestrian Parking: The designated parking area as currently designed is too tight of a space for safe horse trailer parking. The current spaces would not allow for horses to be safely tied to the side of a trailer, as is customary equestrian practice. There needs to be at least 20 feet of space between

trailers. A pull-through parking option would be much safer and easier to navigate. Please refer to the current equestrian parking lot at Schooley Mill as a guide. Lastly, there does not seem to be enough room for horses to safely unload from a trailer. As designed horses would be unloaded into the single drive/travel lane. There needs to be an additional 20 feet behind the 55-foot trailer/truck length, without intruding on travel space. Then there needs to be room to pull out.

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- Entrance: Trailers and busses require a large turning radius and currently would have to turn into oncoming traffic to make a safe turn onto the roadway.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking design.

Q: I am very concerned about the lack of feasibility for any trails at Bacon Ridge to include equestrian participation for the following reasons:

1. I am aware of previous studies performed by the Department of the Interior as the Bacon Ridge Trails were being proposed, and that it was concluded that the soil was too porous for equestrian use by the Department of the Interior

2. The existing trails are in either

- a. Locations on steep hillsides that are dangerous for horse riding

or

- b. Up and down hills that would be dangerous for horseback riding

3. In order to retrofit these existing trails to then even be considered sizable enough to accommodate horseback, so much revisional construction of the trails would be necessary, so much disruption of the ecosystem would occur, that the said ecosystem would never recover

4. It is well established that the updigging of the soil by horsetracks creates much more disrupted loose soil that is then at risk for erosion during rainfall or spring snow/ice thaw, as compared to hikers, runners, or bikers

However, items 2/3/4 are still superceded by the fact that a Government Agency deemed, via soil analysis, to be too porous for equestrian use

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: Equestrian Parking: The designated parking area as currently designed is too tight of a space for safe horse trailer parking. The current spaces would not allow for horses to be safely tied to the side of a trailer, as is customary equestrian practice. There needs to be at least 20 feet of space between trailers. A pull-through parking option would be much safer and easier to navigate. Please refer to the current equestrian parking lot at Schooley Mill as a guide. Lastly, there does not seem to be enough room for horses to safely unload from a trailer. As designed horses would be unloaded into the single drive/travel lane. There needs to be an additional 20 feet behind the 55-foot trailer/truck length, without intruding on travel space. Then there needs to be room to pull out.

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- Entrance: Trailers and busses require a large turning radius and currently would have to turn into oncoming traffic to make a safe turn onto the roadway."

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking design.

Q: I am not in agreement with the proposed equestrian access to the trail system; therefore I believe that the proposed equestrian trailer parking plans to be premature

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: First I'd like to thank the County for including all users, including equestrians, in the planning process for enhanced access to this very special piece of natural land in the heart of Anne Arundel County. As you are now aware, horses have used the property for decades, (in fact centuries), so the Master Plan is allowing for this low-impact and natural legacy use to return to the property.

I have a small farm and boarding operation just 12 minutes from the Forney property and BRNA trailhead. Like many of the nearly 1,000 horse farms in Anne Arundel, my farm has in the past decade become essentially land locked by suburban development and I am limited to riding in an enclosed arena on just a few acres. The reality is that access to open land and trails in the County is in exceedingly short supply, unless you have special permission for access from a private property owner. There are really no viable opportunities to ride out on public land in the County. The trails and facilities shown on the County website are either public land leased to private interests, or in the case of the few short trail segments, are simply not viable or appealing to typical equestrians.

My options to ride out on trails or in the open right now are these... I can travel at a minimum 45 minutes and out of my own County – either trailering south to Rosaryville and Patuxent River Park in Prince Georges County, up to Patapsco State Park, or over the Bay Bridge to Wye Island or Tuckahoe Park. This horse-friendly public investment on public lands will be critical to make sure the horse industry has a chance of surviving in Anne Arundel County when adjacent County's are simply more friendly and accessible to riders. But I know the County can and will do better to support horses with such promising locations as Rockhold Creek Farm, the Crownsville property, and even one day the USNA Dairy Farm. Equestrian pursuits are an important agricultural feature and economic driver of our local economy..

To that end, I appreciate the opportunity to share specific comments related to the master plan and engineering documents recently shared with the public.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: The 22 trailer parking spots as proposed are poorly laid out to afford safe and practical use for horse trailer parking.

The configuration requires one to pull head in, then back their rigs out to exit. Backing up a large trailer well is sadly not a skill many have truly mastered, and the tightly packed head in option for

parking trailers will make ease of use and safe circulation of traffic a true barrier to use. If at all possible, offering pull through options, and not requiring long rigs to have to back out on a 45 degree angle would be greatly appreciated.

I also would suggest that the spaces be wider, even if it means losing capacity. Almost all riders tie their horses to the side of the trailer to tack up. As designed, this customary process will not be viable, and would likely result in folks parking every other sport, dropping capacity to 11 spots in practice. See the image of Schooley Mill below showing spacer aisles laid out between parking slots. Consideration should also be given to safe areas to off load horses from the rear ramps of trailers. This configuration would require a horse load and offload into the active travel lane of the parking lot. Horse will on occasion decide that they do not want to get on a trailer, and hours of struggle can ensue. To have traffic regularly driving by a horse that may unexpectable pull back is again a safety issue.

Some real work needs to be done here, and there are numerous examples in the immediate region that could serve as examples of well-designed trailer parking. We hope that the design team might visit or review aerial imagery from other local facilities like Schooley Mill, Rosaryville, Patuxent River Park, and Oak Ridge Park. I hope you might identify a few sources for standard trailer parking templates or design manuals that might help guide a more viable parking configuration. Such resources would also spell out acceptable turning radius at the corners to allow for larger rigs to negotiate without curb hopping.

A: Thank you for your comments. We are evaluating the parking area.

Q: The concept of having "hitching posts," is not truly a needed or functional feature that would be utilized. Likewise, the water trough concept presents a bio-hazard, and a simple water spigot to fill buckets is acceptable and adequate. The only other amenity one might look for is a simple mounting block or platform. Again, examples abound- I am particularly fond of the simple one found at Schooley Mill in Howard County.

The bioretention ponds and tree cover in the median strip adjacent to the parking area is a concern for circulation in an area where folks will be tacking up, walking their horses to cool off, or mounting. A flat simple surface with minimal vegetation that would not entice horses to eat them would be a better option in this area. Consideration to use plants that will not present toxicity concerns for horses should also be part of the vegetative plan.

A simple covered pavilion with picnic tables adjacent to this parking area would be highly desirable. A small fenced enclosure 100 feet by 100 feet for temporary and short term use would be an important safety feature to temporarily hold horses if there are trailer problems or in case of an emergency.

A plan for non structured over flow parking might also be considered to accommodate busy periods. Most places do not have such thoughtfully planned structured parking options as this plan proposes- Overflow parking could be provided on simple bush hogged turf on a relatively flat surface. Having this space as shared use with school buses would bring students in close contact with horses. This co-use should be carefully considered and options to compartmentalize these uses explored for safety concerns- for both kids and horses... Some horses might be a bit overwhelmed by 50 enthusiastic kids bouncing off a bus to run up and uninvited come say hello to ones horse in the adjacent parking spot!.

The relocated entrance / driveway off Severn Chapel offers a safety enhancement to existing conditions and the width for turning in an out appears to be adequate.

I fully support the Ranger-only shooting range and do not believe that with the limited hours and limits of use, that this will present any meaningful safety concerns for horse use. Many people ride in

rural areas where shooting is common, and most reasonably schooled trail horses will not be overly reactive, anymore than they would be to a car backfiring or air brakes on a truck.

While clearly not within this plan, I do hope that this facility can be further cultivated to support broader horse access in the future, to perhaps include use of the larger farm fields for hosting special events, trail challenges, carriage or cart use, or even a Pony Club event some day.

These specific comments address the concerns I have as an equestrian user of the park based on the master plan as shared on the recent meeting. Obviously the larger question remains regarding the scope of eventual horse accessibility to these lands.

I think all involved are aware that there needs to be robust outreach, education, and collaboration between all user groups to ensure safe and civil interactions moving forward, a task which I offer my support for when County staff finds the time is right.

I also want to acknowledge the engagement, efforts and communication in recent months with County staff as they have listened to the concerns and interests of local equestrians, and worked with them to figure out how horse use can be re-established on legacy trails. I believe that continued collaboration with them will help ensure safe multi-user experiences, and shared trail access moving forward.

Given the variety of enthusiastic users, and in consideration that the underlying purpose of the park is to preserve natural areas, I hope that there will be improved public transparency and stakeholder engagement before any additional natural surface trails get built out on this property to ensure that new trails will accommodate all park users in as environmentally sensitive way as possible.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: As a county resident and user of the trails, I strongly oppose the expansion of the parking lots to accommodate the equestrian community. First, as many others have stated, there was a federally funded study that found that the soil at Bacon Ridge is too porous to be suitable for horses. Secondly, if the parking lot is expanded, the equestrians will want trails to use. Having the equestrians use the current trails alongside mountain bikers, hikers, and trail runners is a terrible idea. In other trails across the state, the equestrians have disregarded warnings and used trails even when they are wet, leading to the destruction of the trails. In addition, equestrians rarely pick up after their horses, leading to stinky piles all over the trail. Lastly, it would be a safety concern to have both equestrians and mountain bikers on the same trail. As a frequent user of the trail, there are numerous tight turns and switchbacks where it is inevitable that a mountain biker and horse would collide. Hikers and trail runners are easily able to step to the side, but horses cannot. I would support the expansion of the parking lot if the equestrian community first created their own system of trails. It would be inappropriate to allow the equestrians to ruin years of hard work by the mountain biking community. Without the mountain bikers, the trails would not even exist.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I am a county resident and regular user of the Bacon Ridge trail network for mountain biking and running. I am concerned about the proposed inclusion of horse trailer parking at the site as part of this project. In my years of using the trail system, I have never encountered a horse, and I believe the narrow nature of the trails along with sharp turns would make horse riding unsafe for all users and contribute to substantial trail damage and erosion. It is currently unclear what the strategy is for potential equestrian usage of the trails, and also unclear whether the impact of this has been studied. I believe it is inappropriate to move forward with this project until this issue is clarified. Once it is clarified, public comment should be reopened so that can submit more informed feedback. Thank you.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: My family and I have been extremely grateful to all who have worked hard for many years to build the current trail system, which is not designed for equestrian use. We are very concerned that the capital project at Bacon Ridge includes horse trailer parking, with no plan for sustainable horse trails. Please require the equestrian community to stay on the existing farm roads, and/or build trails that suit their needs, just like the mountain bikers did, so the horses don't damage the amazing resource we now have. It sounds like there is plenty of acreage available. The equestrian community should also begin to join us in the effort to expand into the Crownsville Hospital property.

I believe it is inappropriate to move forward with this project as presented until this issue is sorted out, after which, public comment should be reopened so we can submit more informed comments. Thank you for your consideration.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I am writing to express my concerns regarding equestrian use in the Bacon Ridge Natural Area. As an advocate for the preservation and proper usage of our trail systems, I strongly believe that the existing trails in the Bacon Ridge Natural Area, designed specifically for hiking and mountain biking, are not suitable for equestrian use.

The Bacon Ridge Natural Area is a precious resource that offers a diverse range of recreational opportunities for our community. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations and potential negative impacts that horses may have on the trails. Here are a few reasons why equestrian use in the Bacon Ridge Natural Area may not be appropriate:

**Trail Design and Condition:** The existing trails in the Bacon Ridge Natural Area were purposefully designed and constructed for hiking and mountain biking. These trails often feature narrow paths, steep inclines, and technical sections that are not conducive to safe and enjoyable equestrian use. The unique characteristics of these trails make them unsuitable for accommodating the needs of horses and their riders, potentially resulting in accidents or injuries.

**Trail Preservation:** Allowing horses on trails that were not designed for equestrian use can lead to significant trail degradation. Horse hooves can cause damage, including erosion, deep ruts, and uneven surfaces. This not only affects the safety and enjoyment of hikers and mountain bikers but also requires additional maintenance and repair efforts to restore the trails to their intended condition.

**User Experience:** The Bacon Ridge Natural Area trails have become popular among hikers and mountain bikers due to their specific design and features. The inclusion of horses on these trails could disrupt the experience and safety of other trail users. The presence of horses may lead to conflicts between user groups, and potential accidents due to incompatible speeds and maneuvering capabilities.

**Environmental Impact:** Horses, by their nature, can have a significant negative impact on the natural environment. They trample vegetation, disturb wildlife, and contribute to soil erosion. The fragile ecosystem within the Bacon Ridge Natural Area should be protected to maintain biodiversity and ecological balance, which would be compromised by introducing horses onto the trails.

Considering these factors, it is essential to preserve the Bacon Ridge Natural Area trails for their intended usage by hikers and mountain bikers. I propose exploring alternative options that would accommodate equestrian activities in separate designated areas nearby, allowing horse riders to enjoy their activity while minimizing the potential negative impacts on the existing trail network.

I kindly request that you consider these concerns and prioritize the preservation of the Bacon Ridge Natural Area trails for hiking and mountain biking. By maintaining the trails' integrity and suitability for their intended users, we can ensure the continued enjoyment and safety of these outdoor spaces for all community members.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I appreciate your dedication to the responsible management of our natural areas. Should you require any further information or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: I am opposed to adding horses on trails here. If and only if at limited locations.

No doubt, many sections are hazardous for horse travel.

First, parking lots will need to be much larger.

Horse do much harm to trail in soft areas as see at Jug Bay. Horse people never maintain the trails and expect others to do the fix for them. Jug bay has wide patches of mud that broaden the trails and damage the shrubbery. Horse people expect the park to do it for them at taxpayer expense . Now, Bacon Ridge is maintained by the bikers and hikers, who have demonstrated responsibility in trail management.

At Bacon Ridge, there are many bridges and skinny walkways to go over swamps.

Horses litter the trail. Owners never clean up after horse. The is a problem to hikers and bikers. It attracts flies.

Trails here were hand built by bikers. Much labor and planning involved. It has been several years since the start of Bacon Ridge and we have not seen any horse people show any interest till now or offer to help.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I have several concerns about equestrian usage of the trails at Bacon Ridge.

What trails will the horses be permitted to use? There seems to be some confusion around if access to the singletrack will be granted. The inclusion of horse facilities in this plan when no formal declaration regarding equestrian usage has been made is confusing. A decision regarding equestrian usage should be made before construction begins on this project.

At other parks in MD such as Patapsco and Gunpowder Falls, equestrian usage comes with a large amount of horse feces deposited on the trails. For other trail users this can be unpleasant as it is sometimes deposited in places that are difficult avoid due to narrowness of the trails or difficult to see as it begins to breakdown. For cyclists, this feces can be flung from the tires onto the rider. Are there any plans to mitigate this issue?

If equestrians are granted access to the singletrack, will all future singletrack be constructed to allow equestrian access? In Patapsco this has created situations where some trails have been closed because the construction of a bridge which could sustain the weight of a horse was deemed too costly. Also, I appreciate the unobtrusive visual appearance of the bridges currently in the Forney section and would be disappointed if they had to be removed for more substantial construction.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: As a neighbor to the Bacon Ridge Natural Area Forney Property, environmentalist, outdoor enthusiast, county resident, voter, and tax payer, I encourage efforts to ensure access to enjoy this beautiful area in a responsible way that preserves the integrity and sustainability of the trails, does so

safely, smartly, cost effectively, and does not adversely impact the quality of life or property values of existing residents.

I attended the information session and would appreciate specific responses to the following questions be provided and shared with the community via the county meeting/proposal website in addition to being mailed to registered meeting participants as was promised.

Questions

1. Parking

- A. How was the number of proposed parking spots determined?
- B. How does this number compare with existing and possible parking expansion at other Bacon Ridge trailheads?

2. Traffic

- A. What is the anticipated increase and impact on traffic in the area - specifically along Severn Chapel Road, but also Waterbury and Millersville Roads?
- B. Has a traffic study been done, or is one planned - that addresses both the increase in traffic as well as the impact of slow and wide-turning buses and horse trailers?
- C. Did/will the traffic study assess the potential compounded effects of traffic associated with the planned Millersville Park?
- D. When will results of the traffic study be made available to the planners and community?

3. Trail Use

- A. Is there an approved trail plan for horse access in the Bacon Ridge Natural Area, specifically for the Severn Chapel access area?
- B. When will that plan/decision on horse access be made available to the planners and the community? Who ultimately makes this decision?
- C. Has a trail impact study been conducted to assess sustainability of the trails and open space/natural area from the expected increased visitor use from this trailhead? When will results be made available to the planners and community?

4. Gun Range

- A. Who will be able to use the proposed gun range, and when? What is the potential it would be made available to other entities (such as other law enforcement, ranger, or natural resources officers), or that its size and times of operation would be expanded?
- B. What gun training options are available for the rangers other than this proposed range?
- C. Are there other placement options within the Bacon Ridge Natural Area that are not in the immediate vicinity of homeowners and users of the Natural Area?

A: Thank you for your comments. This project is being developed as a result of the Bacon Ridge Master Plan which was publicly released on 9/6/22, and is available here:

<https://www.aacounty.org/departments/recreation-parks/capital-projects/Projects/bacon-ridge-natural-area---forney-expansion>

Regarding traffic, although this project does not meet the requirements for a traffic study, we plan to add one so that we can better evaluate the input from the public.

Regarding programming, the Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for this park.

DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope.

Q: 5. Crownsville Hospital Property

What options for horse access and ranger training (e.g. gun range) will be available as part of the Crownsville Hospital campus?

Would it be advisable to consider these aspects together?



## 6. Security

What security measures are planned to protect vehicles and restrict access to the park only during official open times?

What is the role/responsibilities of the Anne Arundel County Police in this plan and their assessment of potential crime risk from the planned improvements?

I support improvements for the ranger buildings and parking so they can better perform their responsibilities. I would also encourage addition of an outdoor pavilion that could be used to provide environment/wildlife educational experiences for children and the community. However, in order to preserve the natural area without negatively impacting neighborhood safety, property values and quality of life, request the following modifications to the proposed plan:

1. Eliminate the gun range. Not only is it unnecessary and cost ineffective given there are existing options available for the rangers, but the addition of gunfire within a natural area close to hiking/biking trails as well as within 200-300 yards of a neighborhood community would ruin the natural area experience and damage lives and value of a neighborhood prized for peace and quiet. Even if originally intended for limited use, it is not unreasonable to assume that the county would be asked to expand access - and thus noise and danger - to other county or state officials.
2. Remove the horse trailer parking accommodations, at least until a time that a thorough study has been done on whether the trails can safely support horse traffic per regulations for horses. The current trails, established and maintained by volunteers, are excellent mountain bike and hiking trails but do not appear suitable for horses per published requirements, and attempts to make them suitable would be extremely costly, unfairly reduce the quality of the hiking/ biking experience, and potentially damaging to the natural area itself.
3. Reduce the number of overall parking to a number that can be proven by studies to: 1) not adversely impact traffic volume and safety on an already dangerous Severn Chapel Road that is narrow with many curves and limited sight lines - particularly in the area of the Bacon Ridge Forney Property entrance. With the current plan of approximately 120 parking spots, a busy day could easily equate to an additional 300+ vehicles including buses and trailers needing to make wide turns into/across both lanes further backing up traffic and severely raising the risk of accidents. 2) not support visitor volumes that would overwhelm the ability of the trail system and wildlife to sustain the use. While availability to the natural area is definitely desired, the improvements should not lead to its demise by "loving it to death."
4. Redesign the entrance to provide a more safe means to enter/exit the parking area. Moving the driveway 20-30 feet west will only minimally improve visibility. It is already challenging for vehicles exiting Chukker Road, for them as well as cars, tucks, buses, and bikes traveling Laing Severn Chapel Road.
5. Pause further progress on the plan until more is known about options for the Crownsville Hospital Area. It would be prudent - fiscally and environmentally - to understand the potential ability of the Crownsville Hospital property to support some of the improvements proposed for the Forney Property, especially given the issues/concerns/questions over traffic volume and safety and trail impact from horses.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my support, concerns and recommendations. I look forward to a reply and hopefully reasonable reconsiderations

A: Thank you for your comments. We do not have any information on the Crownsville Hospital Campus plans at this time. Security is not provided at any of AACo's parks. DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope. Although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public.

Q: I feel that the forney property is public land intended for all citizens. however i also feel that the trail system that has been designed planed and constructed was designed for hiking and mountain biking. Horses and mountain bikers really use a different type of trail design and trail surface. I was recently in Ocala Florida and there they constructed separate trail systems for the horses. This eliminated the interaction between the horses and the bikes and the trail surface was sutable for each use. For instance on a climbing grade the horse hoofs would tear up the smooth compacted grade which is needed for a mountain bike to have traction whereas a horse will gain traction even on loose ground. additionally with the area being environmentally sensitve in the vicinity of some of the trails and bridge crossings you may not want to have loose dirt close to a steep slope. I feel that it would be appropriate for an equestrian trail designer to layout a trail network that is exclusively for horses, observes the environmental area and are built with equestrian riding in mind. By having separate trail systems which may cross at certain points, you would have minimized the interaction between horses and bikes, you would maintain a surface that is acceptable for each use and things such as bridge crossings and trail geometry would be designed for the equestrian use. I think the first step would be for the equestrian community to put together a proposed mapping of an equestrian trail network which honors environmental concerns and minimizes trail interaction which can be reviewed by all the parties.

There is enough land that we can all share and allow the equestrian community develop separate equestrian trail network

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: It is unclear what the long term vision is for the Bacon Ridge Natural Area. It is not clear what the long term plan is for equestrian access on the existing trail network, but equestrian trailer parking is proposed to be added.

There is discussion of proposed bus parking but it is unclear which groups will be utilizing this and for which specific program(s).

There is no formal traffic study that has been presented with the added parking spaces.

There is no site assessment available for storm water for review as well.

I would not recommend going forward with this plan until: 1. the longer term plan and vision are clearly defined and shared with the public; 2. a traffic study is available for review; and 3. a site assessment has been completed for storm water management and available for review.

A: Thank you for your comments. This project is being developed as a result of the Bacon Ridge Master Plan which was publicly released on 9/6/22, and is available here:

<https://www.aacounty.org/departments/recreation-parks/capital-projects/Projects/bacon-ridge-natural-area---forney-expansion>

Although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public.

Q: The capital project at Bacon Ridge includes horse trailer parking, but it is currently unclear what the scope of equestrian access will be on the existing trail network. I believe it is inappropriate to move forward with this project as presented until that issue is sorted out, after which, public comment should be reopened so we can submit more informed comments.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: At State Parks where equestrians share trails with hikers and mountain bikers, we bikers always respect the horses and I have nothing against them. However, the Bacon Ridge trails were built for

hikers, runners and mountain bikers and the fragile ecosystem of the Bacon Run area is protected by boardwalks and riders who do not ride when the trails are muddy. The boardwalks are not designed for horses and would be bypassed impacting the runoff situation. In addition, the trails were built by volunteer labor and donations from the biking community with no input from the equestrian community. It sounds like there is plenty of land for them to build their own network with their own labor and money.

The capital project at Bacon Ridge includes horse trailer parking, but it is currently unclear what the scope of equestrian access will be on the existing trail network. I believe it is inappropriate to move forward with this project as presented until that issue is sorted out, after which, public comment should be reopened so we can submit more informed comments.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I attended the Community Meeting for the Bacon Ridge Natural Area at Forney Road on May 3rd, 2023. I live in Crofton and frequently run and hike at the Bacon Ridge Natural area as well as the Waterworks trail system. I have been regularly involved in trail building at Bacon Ridge, Waterworks and Patapsco State Park, and I also help as an administrator on the Friends of Bacon Ridge and Waterworks Facebook page, which provides information about trail use and maintenance for mountain bikers, trail runners, hikers and others. I am also a member of the Annapolis Striders Running Group.

I wanted to express a few areas in which I have questions and concerns regarding the proposed project involving construction of a 90+ car parking lot and an equestrian parking area.

I read some comments by users on our community's Facebook page that previous studies indicated that the soil at Bacon Ridge is not suitable for equestrian use.

I have also read that most of the current narrow trails with wooden boardwalks and bridges were not built to the width needed by equestrians.

This leads me to wonder who will decide what if any trails are suitable for equestrian use, and whether this will be determined before further proceeding with the plans for the equestrian parking area.

Additionally, another area of concern is in the proposed removal of a big part of the current meadow in the current Forney area in order to create the 90- car parking lot as well as the horse trailer parking area. I would suggest that an investigation into the impact on the local ecosystem be considered, being that the meadow currently contains many pollinator-friendly plants, and furthermore, is a beautiful and calming area for human visitors.

Lastly, I would like to know how to follow and contribute to further discussions regarding these plans.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park. Please check the capital projects website for updates here: [https://www.aacounty.org/departments/public-works/engineering/Capital\\_Projects](https://www.aacounty.org/departments/public-works/engineering/Capital_Projects)

Q: 1. Can you please provide a copy of the traffic study that was done regarding the increase in traffic on Severn Chapel Road that will result from the implementation of the plan? This is a narrow road with no shoulders and is already dangerous.

2. I see the link to the organization chart on the webpage, but I can not find your name (I searched for Emma Pfefferkorn who I believe is the County POC). Can you please identify your position in the Planning and Zoning business unit and also your Managers? Also, please provide the name and contact info for your Manager.

3. Are the planned new parking lots an impervious surface? Was there any kind of environmental impact study conducted?

4. What is the amount of money budgeted for this project?

5. What exactly is a "deer management support facility"? Will this create any noise or disturbance for nearby residents?

I also want to state again for the record my strong opposition to the gun range.

A: Although this project does not require a study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public. Also, DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope.

Q: Love to hike in this park. Would like to see the trails marked more clearly.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: A few comments. I believe the proposed entrance modification will create bigger traffic issues than are given credit. Traffic in that area already has multiplied due to alternate traffic patterns being sent through there by Apps.

There is a real overuse potential due to trying to jam multiple users into one area that doesn't appear to have separation under consideration.

There has to be another location to maintain the range use.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Traffic group is evaluating the entrance design and although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public.

Q: Below are links to two resources to consult for parking planning. The first is a link to the USDA U.S Forest Service Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds and the second link is to the New Hampshire Horse Council Equestrian and Car Parking considerations document, which was created by compiling information from other horse organizations and councils. The latter provides a good summary of key design considerations in developing a horse trailer parking area, including space needed between and behind trailers and length of trailer spaces to accommodate the towing vehicle, a trailer, an open ramp, and space for loading/unloading.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/htm07232816/toc.htm>

<http://www.nhhorsecouncil.org/NHHC%20Forms/Equestrian%20Parking-General.pdf>

Parking Lot Location: Providing an area for horse trailer parking separate from other passenger vehicle parking is ideal to ensure the safety of all users of the park. Horses are prey animals; their first instinct is to flee from sudden movement, loud and unfamiliar noises, and other activities. Through no ill intention, other park users and their pets can easily frighten horses that can then break loose and/or cause harm to themselves or to other horses or humans. Therefore, a parking area designated for horse trailer use only is the safest option. At the very least, horse trailer parking needs to be clearly segregated from other users to provide at least a visual barrier to those tempted to interact with horses without invitation. The proposed plan combines school bus parking with horse trailer parking. Excited, noisy school children, who will become even more excited to see horses at the park, are not a good combination with sensitive and easily frightened animals weighing on average approximately 1100 pounds. Horse owners know that the first inclination for children is to want to touch horses and usually children unfamiliar with horses approach horses in a rushed manner.

Parking Lot Configuration: The size proposed for the parking lot appears adequate but will not support 28 trailers as expressed by the designer during the May public hearing. (12 trailer spots is probably adequate.) Please see the necessary design specifications provided in the two links above. The drawing for the parking lot (Figure J. on page 10 of the Final Master Plan Report) depicts parking on both sides of the parking lot. The parking spaces are far too tight to allow safe trailer parking and

tying to the side of a trailer for grooming, tacking, and other cooling purposes. Again, please see the provided links for space requirements between trailers and for required length of trailer spaces to provide adequate space for a towing vehicle, a trailer, and loading and unloading of horses. Horse trailer parking should be designed in the middle of the parking lot to provide the easiest and safest method to pull in to a space and pull directly out of that space (“pull-in/pull-out”). Pull-in/pull-out configuration also provides space for perimeter parking of trailers. The proposed configuration in Figure J. requires at least one side of the parking lot to back out of a space which is more difficult for drivers and more hazardous to pedestrians that may walk behind a trailer.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: Figure J. depicts trees surrounding the parking lot and trees and stormwater best management practices, in the form of what appear to be bioretention areas, located in between parking spaces. The trees planted in between spaces 1) use valuable space needed between trailers, and 2) can pose a hazard to horses and humans who may unintentionally make contact with a tree. Horses tend not to stand completely still when tied. Trees on the side of the parking lot can cause the same issues for trailers parked on the side of the lot. Trees need to be set well back from the trailers and eliminated from the center of the lot. Tree limbs should be trimmed to at least 14 feet from the ground to not interfere with horses.

The landscape/stormwater treatment features located in the center of the lot should be removed for safety and space saving purposes. Swales, other landscape/stormwater treatment depressions, and rock should be placed well back from horse trailer parking. No curb and gutter should be used around horse trailers. Stormwater treatment and control requirements may be met through stormwater best management practices located on the edges of the site and through grading.

Sufficient turning radius needs to be provided at entrance/exit points and in aisles. See specifications in links provided.

Surface Materials: During the May 2023 public hearing, the designer stated that the parking lot would be an asphalt surface. Asphalt and other solid surfaces can be slippery to horses, especially those that wear horse shoes (the majority) and particularly when these surfaces are wet. A gravel surface will be a much safer option and less costly. Pea gravel, sized 5/8 and smaller is safe for both barefoot and shod horses. The sole of a horse’s foot bruises on rock and large gravel; bruises can result in lameness and more serious injuries.

Plants: Care must be exercised in selecting any plants for your landscape design. Some native species, such as red maple and rhododendron, are poisonous to horses. The following link lists plants that are toxic to horses and those that are non-toxic to horses: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/horse-plant-list>

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: Water: A closed water system with a hose and spigot is a nice amenity for this area to fill water buckets and hose hot horses. However, since most horse owners travel with their own water to hydrate and cool their horses, a water station is not essential to open the area to horses. An area to tie a horse while using a hose to cool off the horse is useful, but a “hitching post” for tacking is not practical since tack and grooming supplies are carried on trailers and are used most easily and safely (next to the horse) at the trailer. An outdoor wash stall is not required but would be a nice amenity.

The following is a link describing how to create an outdoor wash stall:

<https://www.nwhorsesource.com/build-an-outdoor-wash-rack-tips-for-happy-horse-bathing-outside/>

Manure Disposal: A manure disposal area can also be included. The manure can be used as feedstock for composting at another location in the park or designed for onsite composting. Manure should be

located well away from trailer parking to avoid interaction with flies. However, horse owners are accustomed to carrying out manure and travel with muck buckets and tools.

Restroom Facilities: The provision of a portable toilet will be appreciated by all park users.

Picnic tables or pavilion: A picnic area can be incorporated into the design for riders to congregate and take a break/have a snack before leaving the park. Again, riders are accustomed to removing any food/drink waste that they generate.

Signage: Large lettering on signs placed in easily observable locations and placed well before turns are needed. Sudden moves in a loaded horse trailer are not safe for the horses and are difficult to perform, and turning and/or backing a horse trailer is not always simple if a turn is missed.

Shooting Range: The shooting range should be located in an area of the park to prevent harm to park users and to avoid loud noise in close proximity to horses, which can cause them to spook.

A: Thank you for your comments.

Q: I appreciate the extensive, volunteer-created-and maintained bike trails at Bacon Ridge, and am happy to see that this community-driven project is getting so much attention; by its nature, the design of these wonderful user-maintained bike trails are not safe for equestrian use, and modifying them to be so would make them worse bike trails. I am concerned that access for horse trailers is included in this plan without clear guidelines about which areas are reserved for use of mountain bikers and hikers. If the county chooses to make additional, separate facilities for equestrians, then I would like to know what the budget and development plan for that would be.

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: The capital project at Bacon Ridge includes horse trailer parking, but it is currently unclear what the scope of equestrian access will be on the existing trail network. I believe it is inappropriate to move forward with this project as presented until that issue is sorted out, after which, public comment should be reopened so we can submit more informed comments

A: Thank you for your comments. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park.

Q: I am concerned about the proposed changes/development to the Bacon Ridge Nat. area. The proposed development to accommodate horse trailers off of Severn Chapel Road presents an increase risk to drivers, cyclists and potentially the horses as the road already has limited visibility in certain areas and is very narrow.

As a homeowner that borders the area, the proposed gun range is very concerning. This proposal presents a risk to the environment with increased noise pollution and potentially invites unwanted/unwelcome traffic in the area.

I am not opposed to a gun range or an equestrian center. I am opposed to it being developed in my back yard.

A: Thank you for your comments. Although this project does not require a traffic study based on the anticipated number of daily visitors, we plan to add one to the project in the interest of evaluating the input from the public. The Department of Recreation and Parks is evaluating and developing the programming for the park. DRP has elected to utilize another facility for the ranger training and the range will be deleted from this project's scope.