

# 2017 Highlights



In its seventh year, Conservation Montgomery is an all-volunteer 501c3 nonprofit. Our board of directors accomplishes our mission with support from other volunteers and members of the organization. Tax-deductible financial support from members and donors allows us to pursue projects like those outlined below.

## Environmental education and awareness

*Working with community members to foster a conservation ethic*

In 2017, we continued to promote awareness and environmental education in Montgomery County communities. A fourth year of **Home Tree Care 101 (HTC 101)** classes was supported with a generous grant from the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), allowing us to hold 2017 spring and fall classes and have materials for our website and classes translated into Spanish. In the future, we hope to schedule a class taught completely in Spanish for homeowners in the Latino community. Certified arborists teach these hands-on classes to help homeowners learn more about caring for trees on their private property. With proper care, trees -- our work horses of the environment -- can live longer and be less hazardous in severe weather. HTC 101 is held outdoors in neighborhoods throughout the county.



With assistance from Montgomery-Blair High School teacher Anne Mathews and a grant from the Takoma Foundation, we continued our **Young Environmental Writers (YEW)** project in 2017. We invited high school students to "unplug" from electronics and plug into nature instead. We took them on hikes through Rock Creek Park, Rachel Carson Conservation Park and the C&O Canal Park to teach them the magic of nature and the joys of environmental writing. We often have them write on site where the sounds and sights of the natural world directly affect creativity. In July, the students played a leadership role in a guided hike as part of the University of Maryland Writers Project at the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge. The YEW project has resulted in a collection of student work published on our website. We honored Ms. Mathews in 2016 with our first *Joe Howard Environmental Award* for her service and dedication to the YEW project.

## Parks stewardship and local environmental advocacy

Protection of ecological integrity in our parks and county green space is one of our highest priorities. We again supported funding in the Parks budget that enhances natural resource based protections and improvements to stream valley and conservation parks, as well as restoration of historic structures within our 35,000 acres of award-winning parklands. We met with park officials on the Commission's **Park Rules and Regulations**, supporting improved stewardship and signage for natural surface trails and habitat-based limits to park hours. We worked on the **Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS)** that guides policy and vision for our parklands in the coming years. We applaud the shift in vision for urban parklands to designs emphasizing functional community gathering spaces with more green infrastructure and less hardscape while continuing to seek added protection for our most sensitive conservation lands.

We continue efforts to increase county tree canopy cover, through support of the **DEP Green Streets Program** to control roadway runoff through retrofits, planting and improved road design. We are part of the **Stormwater Partners Network**, a coalition of regional watershed groups and advocates for county water quality restoration goals under the Clean Water Act (MS4 Permit). We strongly support enhanced green infrastructure to protect our public drinking water supply. Most recently, we have been working with the County Council to maintain restrictions on the expansion of sewer systems into low-density residential 'green wedge' zoned portions of the county and the 93,000 acres of the Agricultural Reserve through amendments to the **Ten Year Water and Sewer Plan**.

## Keeping the community informed and engaged



Conservation Montgomery hosted another field trip to view champion trees in 2017 with a fall **Big Tree Tour** led by Joe Howard, a member of the Montgomery County Forestry Board and a lifetime member of this nonprofit. Our group traveled by bus to visit and learn about a dozen of the oldest and largest champion trees in Kensington, Bethesda, North Bethesda and Garrett Park.

In 2017, we continued to communicate the importance of protecting natural resources right where we live with outreach at the annual **Greenfest** event and the annual **Takoma Park Folk Festival**. A goal over the next year is to continue expanding our reach to the Latino community in Montgomery County. We were a proud sponsor of the **Naturally Latinos** conference organized by our partners with the Audubon Naturalist Society. Conservation Montgomery added a new page in the Spanish language to our website this fall.



For more information: [www.ConservationMontgomery.org](http://www.ConservationMontgomery.org)  
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