

2021 Highlights



Heading into our 12th year, Conservation Montgomery is an all-volunteer 501c3 nonprofit. Our board of directors accomplishes the Conservation Montgomery mission with support from tax-deductible donations and help from other volunteers who support our mission. Tax-deductible financial support from donors allows us to pursue activities like those outlined below.

Environmental education and increasing awareness



Despite the limitations of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2021, we promoted awareness and environmental education in Montgomery County communities by continuing our outdoor programs. We launched new Spanish language **Home Tree Care 101** (HTC 101) web pages and translated our tree care video series into both Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. We held 13 HTC 101 spring and fall classes. 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 classes are held outdoors in neighborhoods throughout the county. We thank the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection for grant support

to hold these classes and we thank the County Executive for including HTC 101 as a strategy in the *Montgomery County Climate Action Plan*.

We held **Big Tree Tours** in the spring and fall, guided by Joe Howard. The group viewed big trees in the Agricultural Reserve and at McCrillis Gardens. In addition to the tours, we added a special Big Tree Tours page to our website. Celebrating nine years of these tours, we are grateful to Joe Howard for leading these educational events over the years and look forward to hosting many more with him as our guide.

In the winter of 2021, we held a **Nature Poetry Salon** hosted by our Vice Chair, Ginny Barnes. The Zoom session was held on a Sunday afternoon with participants reading their favorite nature poetry. More of these events are planned for 2022.



Advocacy and community involvement

Even during the pandemic, our hardworking Advocacy Committee was unstoppable in 2021. Through Zoom meetings, the committee has monitored issues and represented Conservation Montgomery in Planning Board hearings, meetings with County Council members and interactions with county agency officials. We track the issues and let you know when it's time to contact elected/non-elected officials to make your voice heard about protection of vital environmental resources. To gain more insight into the priorities of the community, County Executive Marc Elrich joined us for a June board meeting and responded to our questions about various natural resource issues.

Ten Mile Creek: Our fight to protect the Ten Mile Creek watershed is ongoing. We testified before the Planning Board in December 2020 and September 2021, urging strict adherence to the Master Plan to keep new home development at low

levels to preserve water quality in the watershed. Central to the issue is making sure impervious cover does not exceed five percent in each of the two most sensitive sub-watersheds. The current plans greatly exceed science-based five percent thresholds. One sub-watershed would exceed ten percent impervious cover.



The Route 355 - Clarksburg Bypass: The County Department of Transportation and the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission are promoting a destructive highway alignment that violates the Master Plan. We partnered with the Friends of Ten Mile Creek to submit a letter to the County Executive urging adherence to the Master Plan alignment which will preserve a wetland, avoid a stream crossing and minimize forest loss. The Planning Board deferred a decision on the alignment this summer. We will continue to defend Ten Mile Creek and the Little Seneca Reservoir

The Agricultural Zone – the 535-acre Broad Run/Beverly Farm Property near Poolesville: Montgomery Parks proposes to buy 472 acres to protect forest and to develop a multi-use trail system. This will terminate a 535-acre agricultural easement. The Ag community opposes the plan. Ag easements have never been terminated in the state of Maryland. At issue is a potential timber cut allowed in Ag easements and the monetary value of the easement to compensate Ag interests if the land is acquired. We are engaged in this complicated issue to assure that natural resources and agriculture interests are respected and protected.

Improving Our Tree and Forest Laws: Representatives from Conservation Montgomery, along with partner organizations, are advocating for county tree and forest laws to be strengthened. These laws include the Forest Conservation Law, the Tree Canopy Law, and Roadside Tree Protection Law. There is growing data and awareness of the critical role of trees and forests with to mitigate climate change and sustain healthy and livable communities; our laws should protect and reflect on that importance to a greater extent than they do today. Advocacy is focused on improving and updating mitigation requirements, closing loopholes in the language, and incorporating best practices in other nearby jurisdictions. We will need support from our the community as these measures move forward.

Transparency of Forest Banking: Conservation Montgomery testified at the State Legislature regarding the need for greater public transparency for the forest bank program in the county. It had been difficult for county residents to track where and when the forest bank program was being used as offsite mitigation for development projects, and even harder to tell if mitigation – by way of replanting trees -- was occurring in the same watershed. The Montgomery Planning Department responded and created a publicly accessible tracking system and GIS map for current and future tracking and mapping of forest bank transactions. It does not contain historical data, but this response shows progress.

Including Green Infrastructure in Thrive 2050: Conservation Montgomery joined partners in a letter to encourage the Council to include language prioritizing equitably distributed natural green infrastructure into the Thrive 2050 Plan, an update to Montgomery County's leading planning policy document, the General Plan The Thrive 2050 Plan is currently being reviewed by the Council; we believe language in the Plan needs to include a greater focus on protection and expansion of our natural environment. As drafted, the Thrive 2050 plan does not adequately acknowledge the important role green infrastructure will play throughout our county over the next 30 years

And there's more... Conservation Montgomery has also supported Parks budget items regarding natural resource protection in 2021. We continue to oppose I-495/270 lane expansions and we want the M83 highway removed from the Master Plan. We continue to work with partners in the Ag Reserve to assure land use for food production and forest creation.

For more information on this and other CM activities, please visit [ConservationMontgomery.org](https://www.conservationmontgomery.org).