



## **Board supports proposed Montgomery County Council bill to expand the County Water Quality Protection Charge to non-residential sites**

**Sent on April 3, 2013 by Michael Wilpers  
President, Friends of Sligo Creek**

On behalf of the Board of Friends of Sligo Creek, I am delighted to provide this letter in support of the Council's efforts to protect watersheds in Montgomery County. The bill under consideration (34-12) would expand the County Water Quality Protection Charge to non-residential sites, filling an important gap in providing adequate funds to protect watersheds like Sligo Creek.

As you may know, the Friends of Sligo Creek is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing, and appreciating the ecological health of the Sligo Creek watershed. We are proud to be celebrating our twelfth year. During our existence we have been very active in holding events that bolster the natural aspects of the watershed and educate the community to appreciate the stream valley park. We regularly work with the State and Counties, as well as other volunteer organizations, to further our mission. The Friends of Sligo has been commended for its efforts by Montgomery County, among other entities.

The Sligo Creek watershed extends from Wheaton through Takoma Park. It includes a portion of Montgomery County that has been densely developed for many years. It contains much pavement and other impervious surface, and perhaps the thinnest tree canopy of any stream valley in the down-county area. Consequently the water quality and biology of the park have suffered considerably. Fortunately, over the last 30 years, the County has taken important steps to mitigate stormwater damage through tree-planting, building rain gardens, creating green streets, and installing green roofs and other bioretention installations. Recently the status of the creek has been upgraded from "poor" to "fair". This is heartening because not only does its health benefit humans, critters, and plants that live in the watershed, but also helps the bodies of water downstream-- Northwest Branch, the Anacostia, the Potomac, and the Bay.

The benefits of the stormwater fees, first enacted in 2002, to improving water quality, stormwater management, and, indirectly, wildlife habitat, are well-documented. By expanding the fees to non-residential properties, the proposed action will enable the County to increase its valuable work, as well as remove an inequity by requiring almost all non-residential owners to pay their fair share. We also appreciate that Bill 34-12 sets up incentives in the form of fee credits for landowners who install practices that reduce runoff, such as green roofs. We encourage you to vote for this legislation, required by state law, HB987, to be enacted.

We appreciate the Council's hard work toward useful legislation to protect trees, forests, and watersheds. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the public and the environment. I hope you will continue to find a way for Montgomery County to be at the forefront of communities that provide a wonderful place to live by protecting our environment.

Thank you and warmest regards from the Friends of Sligo Creek,