



## Board Letter to County Council responding to staff report on artificial turf

**The letter to T&E Chair Berliner and the Artificial Turf Staff Work Group expresses concerns about the potential for harm to the environment, especially to aquatic ecosystems, from the plastic and pulverized tires in the county's artificial turf fields and playgrounds.**

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The Board of the Friends of Sligo Creek appreciate the Council's interest in seeing that the benefits and risks of use of artificial turf sports fields be carefully considered before being adopted for wide use on public spaces. Unfortunately the recent draft report on the issue from the Artificial Turf Work Group fails to adequately address major questions about human safety, environmental injury, or even the comparative benefits of artificial turf fields.

We strongly recommend that no new artificial turf fields with tire crumb be installed until safety and environmental concerns are fully addressed and alternatives fully considered. We recommend further that the Workgroup report and its follow up not be the final guidance for the county parks, schools and recreation departments, but part of an on-going discussion.

We support the attached letters previously submitted from the [Neighbors of Northwest Branch](#) and [Western Montgomery County Citizen's Advisory Board](#). They both conclude that the current draft from the Working Group is inadequate to address major risk or benefit concerns. However, we would like to add several comments:

1) It is not possible to assess environmental impact or safety without knowledge of each component of the carpet and infill. We ask that the full composition of the materials making up an artificial turf field and the material safety data sheets on each component be included as part of the report . Because of the complexity of the tire crumb infill material now being used in Montgomery County, the presence of toxic compounds, and the wide variability from batch to batch, full disclosure of ingredients is essential to inform testing needs and use decisions.

2) We are concerned that the study in San Francisco CA strongly relied on by the Working Group to understand potential leaching was done under very different environmental conditions than exist in this area. Heat extremes, soil acidity, humidity, snowfall, amount of rainfall and it's acidity, are all greater in our area. Independent studies under our conditions need to be done. This is especially important for zinc due to its known toxicity to aquatic and soil micro-organisms important to a healthy ecosystem.

3) The draft report does not adequately describe the drainage system of the Blair HS field. Water on the field does not pass through a sand or other bio-filtration system before being dumped in Sligo Creek. It is simply sent through pipes under and around the field that then flow through stormwater drains leading to Sligo Creek. Thus there is no attempt at actual filtering or detoxification of run-off from the Blair field. Note that it is not known if a sand or other form of filtration would actually remove zinc from run-off to keep it out of groundwater or surface water.

Thank you for your continuing interest in protecting our children and the environment.

Regards,  
Bruce Sidwell (Board of the Friends of Sligo Creek)

