



Board Letter to County Council in support of the County Council's efforts to protect trees in Montgomery County.

On behalf of the Board of Friends of Sligo Creek, I am delighted to provide this letter in support of the County Council's efforts to protect trees in Montgomery County. The two bills under consideration (35-12: Tree Canopy Conservation; and 41-12: Streets and Roads - Roadside Trees- Protection) fill important gaps in protecting an urban watershed like Sligo Creek.

As many of you know, the Friends of Sligo Creek is a volunteer organization that helps look after the creek. 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 "to restore the health and water quality, natural habitat, and ecological well-being of the Sligo Creek watershed by bringing neighbors together to build awareness, improve natural habitat, and protect our community's heritage." 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 worst tree canopy of any of the stream valleys 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 by various methods, including tree-planting that have helped improve the health of the creek and surrounding park. 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 having a healthy Sligo also helps the bodies of water that its waters flow to: Northwest Branch, the Anacostia, the Potomac, and the Bay.

The benefits of trees to water quality, stormwater management, wildlife habitat, clean (and cool) air, and the good mood of residents, are well-documented and unassailable, so I won't go into them here. I hope you take them as "granted". The point we want to make in this letter, is that the two pieces of legislation mentioned above, seem to us to be important fixes to tree protection gaps that are of great importance to the Sligo Creek valley. By focusing on maintaining trees by roadsides, and those being affected by development of small parcels of land (i.e., "in-fill"), these bills will go a long way to fixing a critical gap in protecting the canopy in our watershed.

We appreciate your 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 ways 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,

Bruce Sidwell (Board of the Friends of Sligo Creek)