

To: Montgomery County Maryland County Council
From: Kit Gage, Advocacy Director
Friends of Sligo Creek

March 14, 2018

RE: T&E Meeting about Use of Salt

Salt on the Roads – Risks of Salinization to the Park and Environs and Suggestions

As you know Friends of Sligo Creek is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.

Given that mandate, we have become increasingly concerned about the increased use and significant wastage of salt to treat roads in the watershed. While this for us is anecdotal, it is a drumbeat of a theme on our listserv and in winter conversations of our folks. **We strongly back investigation of and implementation of improved efficiencies and possible alternatives to current practice. This could be regulation or law, well enforced. We also support salt listed and treated as a pollutant of our streams.**

We in Friends of Sligo Creek welcome having Montgomery County carefully consider options to change the way salt is used today: 1) to use less of it, 2) to use any salt product more efficiently and effectively, 3) consider if there are other materials in the trade that work more or less comparably, and 4) perhaps as important, how to make sure any changed regulation is implemented thoroughly and enforced well throughout the trade. We are concerned about streets of course, including neighborhood streets where salt tends to get dumped. Also we are concerned about parking lots and use by contractors who may not be as well trained or as familiar with any change in regulations/laws.

There are a number of studies nationally documenting increased use of sodium chloride for road and parking lot treatment. Similarly there are many studies documenting a seriously worrisome increase in salt in our drinking water, groundwater and streams. Even if salt use were halted today, these trends would continue for years to come from salt already soaked into the ground.

We support a variety of options to improve the efficiency of salting. Chief among them seem to include using brine – the solution using much less salt before a snow event. And also requirements when brining isn't possible of minimizing use of sodium chloride by trucks that should provide carrots and sticks to limit use and penalize dumping.

Here are two studies documenting the problem:

In MD, Scott Stranko with DNR
paper: [http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/Documents/2013_Stranko_Road_Salt_\(final\)_T_MF_edits.pdf](http://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/Documents/2013_Stranko_Road_Salt_(final)_T_MF_edits.pdf) and his email: scott.stranko@maryland.gov

Dr. Sujay Kaushal of UMD: <http://www.pnas.org/content/102/38/13517> and
article: <http://www.baltimoresun.com/features/green/blog/bs-hs-salty-streams-20150102-story.html>
and his email: skaushal@umd.edu

New Hampshire, obviously a big user of snow and ice treatment has some relevant experience that includes brining.

Here is a link to some: <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/was/salt-reduction-initiative/tech-assist-bmp-practices.htm>

Here are some alternatives that have been considered – obviously less toxic than salt but pretty funny (beet juice=pink snow).

<http://www.news-herald.com/general-news/20180129/road-salt-is-threatening-us-waterways-beet-juice-and-beer-are-other-options>

We look forward to participating in ongoing discussion and legislation and/or regulation to facilitate solutions to this important problem.

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