

Protecting Ten Mile Creek in Clarksburg, Montgomery County, Maryland

Fact Sheet from the Audubon Naturalist Society, July 2009

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Action requested:

* Email County Executive Leggett (ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov); Council President Andrews (Councilmember.Andrews@montgomerycountymd.gov); and Planning Board Chairman Hanson (MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org) to urge them to: 1) Move the proposed bus depot out of Ten Mile Creek watershed; and 2) Deny new water and sewer lines and downsize the developments in Clarksburg Stage IV.

* Before Clarksburg was developed, promises were made to protect the watershed. Now we've seen the intense development which has ravaged the local streams. We need to act now to protect what's left.

* Support the Planning Board staff recommendation to look for alternative bus depot site AND undertake a Master Plan amendment to analyze impacts of current development and allow stakeholders to revise the 1994 document: www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2009/documents/20090709_clarksburg_stage4_report-rev.pdf

* Ten Mile Creek, in the Clarksburg area, is part of Little Seneca Creek and is a designated drinking water supply and trout stream. Ten Mile Creek flows steadily, clear and cold, and teems with fish, many different kinds of aquatic insects, salamanders and other life forms. This high-quality stream has been monitored for the past 12 years by volunteer Water Quality Monitors, trained and certified by the Audubon Naturalist Society, and even longer by scientists with Montgomery County's DEP.

* The County Council in 1994 promised to protect Ten Mile Creek through naming it and its watershed a "Special Protection Area." The County also enabled the application of strict protections via the Clarksburg Master Plan, Stage IV reviews and possible land use actions. Protecting the rural character of Ten Mile Creek's watershed is key to protecting Ten Mile Creek itself.

* Threatening Ten Mile Creek are four proposed development projects: a Ride-On bus and heavy equipment depot with 22 impervious acres, and proposed subdivisions on land owned by 3 companies currently zoned for more than 1600 total units (including 900 units on a parcel owned by Pulte). These projects threaten the quality of Ten Mile Creek because they would involve a heavy loss of vegetation and an increase of pavement. Downscaling these projects is necessary to protecting Ten Mile Creek.

* Montgomery County should move the bus depot to another, already-urbanized area using expanded search criteria. The County needs to do a site search with Smart Growth criteria that give priority to already-paved "greyfields," and that avoids the paving of existing "greenfields" (areas that are now meadow, farm and/or woodland open spaces).

* The County asserts that engineered stormwater devices will protect the stream from stormwater pollution from these developments, but while these devices can lessen the impact of polluted stormwater runoff, they cannot prevent damage to the Creek's high quality. Such devices are effective only in tandem with planning protections for high quality, sensitive creeks.

* No new water and sewer lines should be provided to proposed residential developments in high quality watersheds—such infrastructure is a driver of sprawl. Montgomery County needs to require impervious surface limitations of 5% or less and minimum forest and field preservation of 65% or above.

* County experience in protecting Upper Paint Branch, Sandy Spring in Upper Northwest Branch, and Upper Rock Creek (prior to the incursion of the ICC into these watersheds) indicates the success of land use and zoning-based watershed protections. Scientific data reviews also support this approach.