



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

March 30, 2009

Chairman Bulova and Board Members:

My name is Stella Koch. I am the Chair of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council and am testifying on the Council's behalf.

EQAC supports the establishment of a stormwater service district and the implementation of an assessment of a penny and a half on property tax. In 1998 with the initiation of the first stream assessment (results were published in 2001), it became evident the County's streams were degraded. Since that point in time the County has made systematic and consistent efforts to improve the health of our streams. We believe that a healthy environment and healthy waters are as essential to a good quality of life as a good school system and safe streets.

A brief history of Fairfax County's stream protection efforts:

### The EQC Policy

In 1975, Fairfax County adopted within the Comprehensive Plan an Environmental Quality Corridor (EQC) policy, which recommends protection of stream valley buffers and other environmentally sensitive areas. In 1981, Fairfax County incorporated more detailed delineation criteria into the policy, and the policy was refined again in the 1990 Policy Plan; the 1990 guidance remains applicable. **The EQC Policy has resulted in over five thousands of acres of stream valley land protected and remaining in a natural vegetated buffer state, which provides the backbone of our trail system in the county.**

### The Occoquan Policy

**1982, Fairfax County downzoned 64 square miles of the Occoquan watershed from one acre to five acre per lot zoning to protect streams and drinking water supplies.**

### County Stream Assessment

**The first Countywide stream assessment was initiated in 1998, with results published in January 2001. Over half of the County's streams are in Poor or Very Poor condition.**

### Stream Protection under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance

In 1993, Fairfax County adopted the Chesapeake Preservation Ordinance in which lands adjacent to the **perennial portion** (as delineated by USGS maps) **of streams were designated as Resource Protection Areas**; and that RPA designation resulted in 520 linear miles of **stream valley buffers being protected under this ordinance.** In 2003 the Chesapeake Bay

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Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC)  
c/o Department of Planning and Zoning  
Planning Division  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-5509  
Phone 703-324-1380  
Fax 703-324-3056  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eqac/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eqac/)

Preservation Ordinance was amended and strengthened. Additionally, in 2002 and 2003 Fairfax County DPWES staff surveyed all Fairfax County streams to ascertain perennality and created a map showing such perennial segments. In 2004, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted this map as guidance for RPA delineation, which resulted in an additional 340 miles of perennial stream buffers being protected. **Fairfax County now has approximately 860 miles of perennial stream segments protected under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.**

Headwater Protection

**In winter of 2008 the Board adopted language for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan to support protection of the upstream intermittent and ephemeral portions of Fairfax County streams.**

All of you as Supervisors have constituents whose houses have been flooded or whose backyards are washing away because of large volumes of unchecked stormwater runoff. There are problems: eroding streams banks threaten roads and bridge abutments, dams in your districts need to be safely maintained, pipes and other stormwater infrastructure need to be replaced, and culverts need to be protected. Implementation of the watershed plans is important as a proactive means to protect streams and begin to address the effects of decades of degradation because of inadequate stormwater management. And the degradation of our streams has consequences not just here at home; we export our stormwater, its sediments and pollutants to the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay will not recover until all the counties in its 64,000 square mile watershed deal with their stormwater runoff. And Federal requirements to that effect will only tighten. But ultimately this is a backyard issue. The residents of Fairfax County deserve healthy clean streams.

We recognize the difficulties you face in balancing a budget in very challenging financial times; however EQAC advocates the initiation of the Stormwater Service District and the penny and a half. To not do so maybe be penny wise but it will ultimately prove pound-foolish.

SMK:nhk

cc:

Jimmie D. Jenkins, Director, DPWES  
Randy W. Bartlett, Deputy Director, DPWES—Stormwater and Wastewater Programs  
Environmental Quality Advisory Council  
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