

PFHOA
POLO FIELDS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
HOAOfficers@restonpolofields.org

May 25, 2010

Re: Sunrise Valley Nature Park

The Polo Fields Community (“PFC”) which consists of approximately 400 single family residences, is located directly across Sunrise Valley Road from not only the presently planned location of the Herndon Monroe metro station and related transit oriented development, but also the Sunrise Valley Nature Park (“SNVP”). The 15 plus acres of wetlands that comprise SVNP is a fantastic benefit and resource to not only the members of the PFC, but also the larger Reston community and Fairfax County. Reston has always regarded open areas and green space as an asset. We in the PFC are no different; indeed, since SVNP borders our community, we perhaps have an unmatched interest in this unique asset. Maintaining such an asset has never been more important than now, with all of the current and planned development and urbanization going on around us. SNVP provides a habitat for more than 120 species of birds, both permanent residents and migratory species, wildlife, and plants, many of which are unique to this type of marsh habitat. The only other comparable site in Fairfax County is Huntley Meadows Park, approximately 30 miles away. Whether you are a birder, a naturalist, or just like peace and quiet, SVNP offers an unmatched local opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives and enjoy a little bit of nature in our corner of Reston.

It is our understanding that SNVP consists of natural wetlands, as well as offsite mitigated wetlands to offset the loss of wetlands in Reston during the development of Reston Town Center beginning in 1993. It is also our understanding that while SVNP is privately owned, presently by Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, it is protected by a conservation covenant managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Surprisingly, despite the conservation covenant, the Army Corps of Engineers can de-designate SVNP as a wetlands to “pave” the way for development and mitigate the loss by acquiring other wetlands that don’t have to be located in Reston, let alone Fairfax County. The Reston Association has sought, and continues to seek, to have the property deeded to the Reston Association in order to maintain this asset in a natural state *in Reston for the Reston community*. The PFC advocates and supports the effort of the Reston Association.

It is also our understanding that Fairfax County’s Comprehensive Plan for our region, specifically addresses the protection of natural areas:

A variety of resource protection mechanisms, including acquisition of conservation/open space, scenic, and historic preservation easements, land dedication and purchase by the County *should be utilized to protect identified resources not currently in public ownership*. The intrusion of

non-recreational development should be restricted and the impacts of offsite development should be mitigated.

(Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Upper Potomac Planning District, Amended through 3-9-2010, at Area III, page 26)(emphasis added). Despite the fact that SVNP is a treasure and asset for the entire County, the County has not chosen to protect SVNP. Instead, it is our understanding that the County is investigating various types of development of SVNP. Initial renderings, drawings, and plans for the site depict the residential and/or commercial development of SVNP. There is active discussion by County representatives regarding providing road access to the Herndon Monroe metro station and parking garages through SVNP. The PFC believes that SVNP is worthy of the protection against non-recreational development explicitly addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The PFC also believes that the County has an obligation to listen to the voices of its constituents, especially those who will be most directly affected, rather than a small number of private developers.

Given the PFC's interest in SVNP, the Reston community's interest in natural areas in general, and the County's mandate to protect natural resources, the PFC advocates the following:

1. the Reston Association continue to work diligently to seek the dedication of SVNP to the Reston Association to be preserved and maintained in perpetuity as a community natural recreation and educational park;
2. the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force recommend that the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan be amended to include specific language requiring that the 15.75-acre Sunrise Valley Nature Park/Wetlands be preserved and maintained in perpetuity by dedicating this irreplaceable property to the Reston Association; and
3. Fairfax County take all steps necessary, including but not limited to designating SVNP an Environmental Quality Corridor parcel and amending the Comprehensive Plan, to protect, preserve, and maintain SVNP in perpetuity.

The PFC encourages individuals and groups who are interested in protecting the SNVP to contact the Reston Mater Plan Special Study Task Force and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to express their support for protecting this unique wetland. The Polo Fields Homeowners Association also wishes to hear from individuals and groups who share our concern. Please feel free to contact us at HOAOfficers@restonpolofields.org.

The Polo Fields
Homeowners Association