

# Stream and Buffer Area Protection: Environmental Quality Corridor Policy

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# Environmental Quality Corridors

- **“An open space system designed to link and preserve natural resource areas and provide passive recreation. The system includes stream valleys, wildlife habitats, and wetlands.”** [Comprehensive Plan Glossary]
- **Comprehensive Plan policy—not regulatory**

# Evolution of EQC Policy

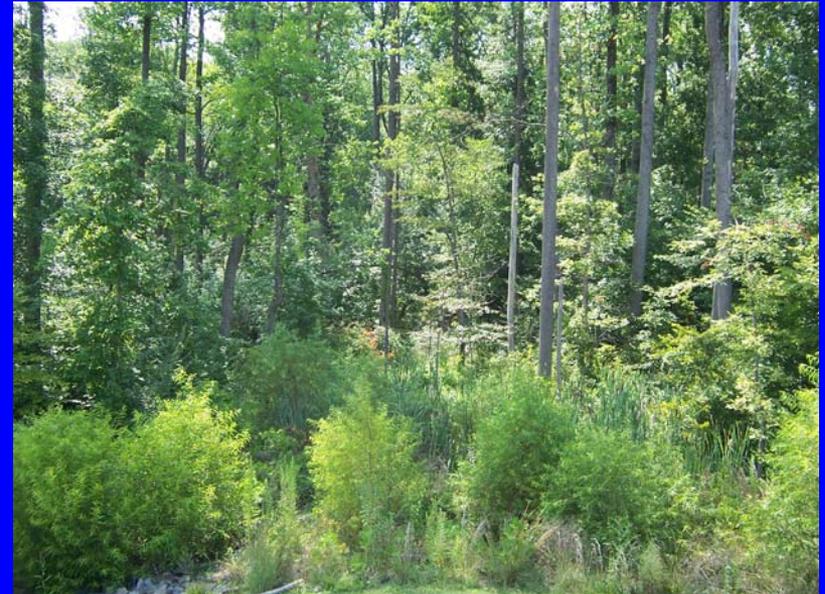
- **Park Authority policy to create a network of Stream Valley Parks (1960s)**
- **Incorporation of Environmental Quality Corridor concept in the Countywide element of the 1975 Plan**
- **Addition of specific EQC delineation criteria in 1981**
- **Refinement of EQC Policy in 1990 as a result of the “Planning Horizons” process and inclusion in the Policy Plan**



# Policy Basis for Fairfax County EQCs

- **Policy Plan  
Environmental  
Objective 9:**

**“Identify, protect and enhance an integrated network of ecologically valuable land and surface waters for present and future residents of Fairfax County.”**



# EQC - Purposes

- **Habitat Quality**
- **Connectedness (wildlife corridor)**
- **Aesthetics (green belts separating land uses and providing passive recreational opportunities)**
- **Pollution Reduction (e.g., vegetative filtering, steep slope protection, microclimate control)**

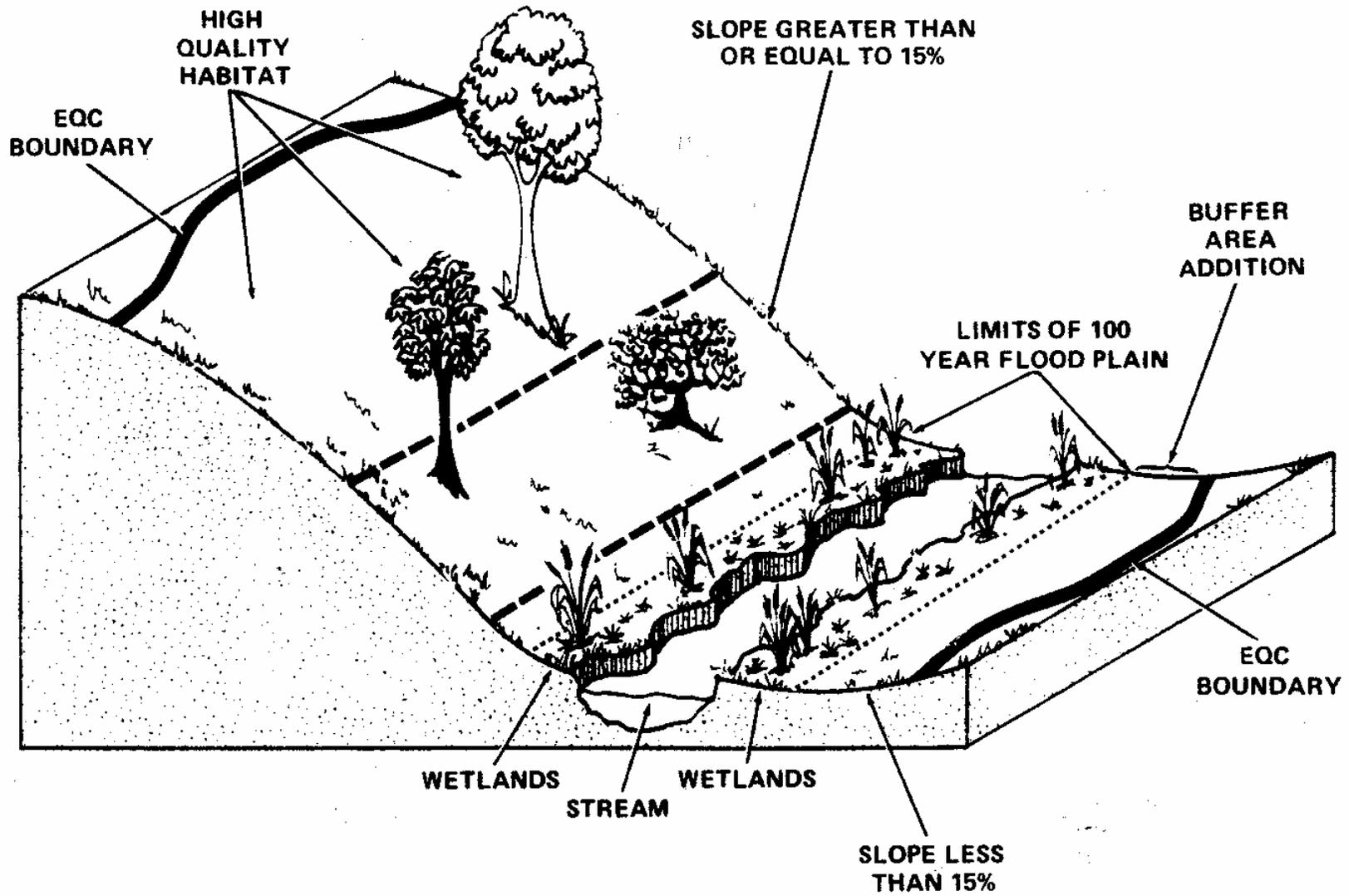


# Implementation

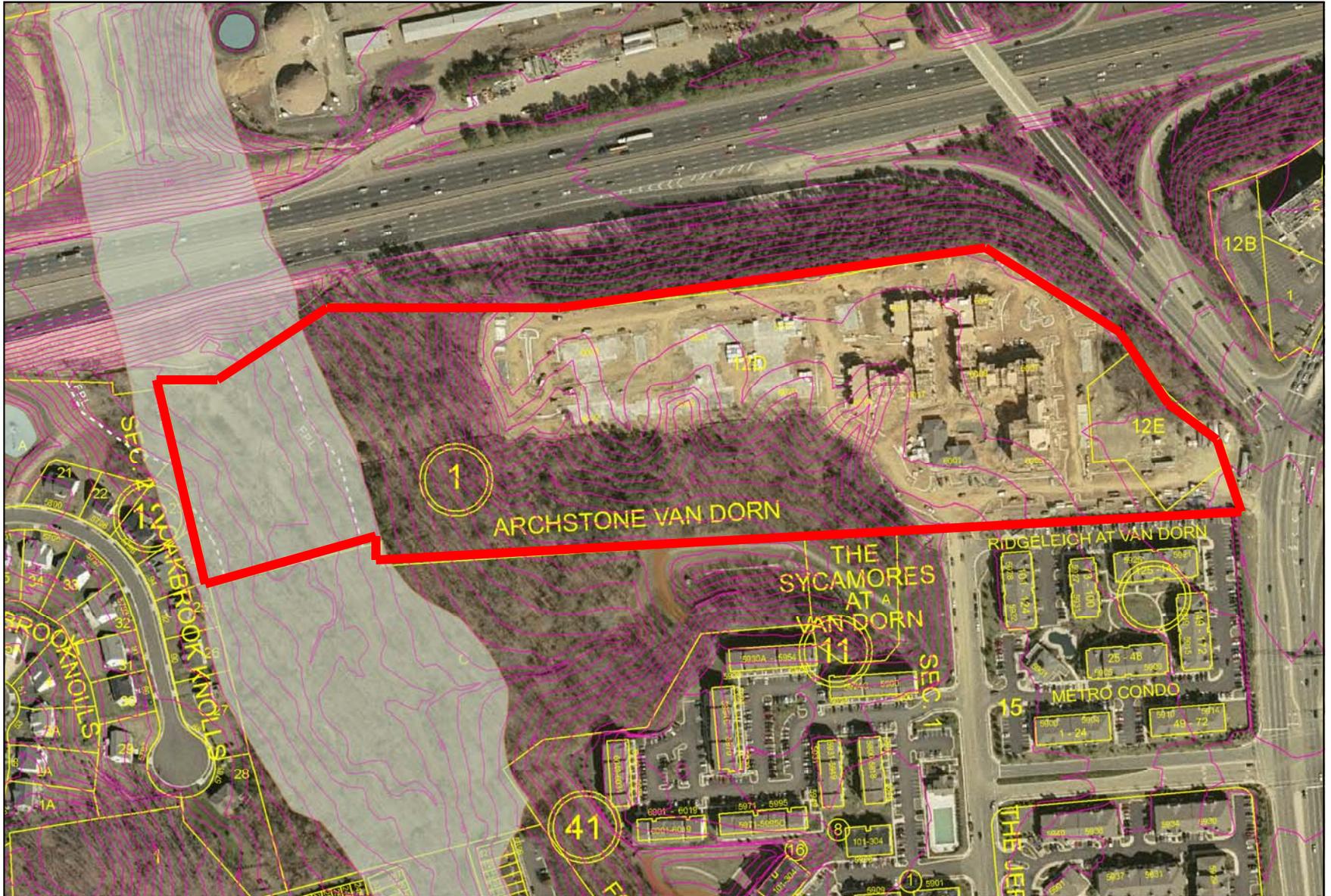
- **Negotiated During Rezoning, Special Exception, Special Permit, Variance, and Related Review Processes**
- **No Regulatory Requirement for Protection of Areas Beyond RPAs and Floodplains**
- **EQC Protection not Required for “By-Right” Development**

# Determining the Boundaries

- **Core is the stream valley**
- **Variable-width, resource-based boundaries focused along stream valleys**
- **Determined by the presence of streams, floodplains, steep slopes, wetlands**
- **Additions can augment habitats and buffers provided by stream valleys**
- **Minimum buffer-width formula used where above features are narrow or absent**
- **No explicit limitation on how far into headwater areas EQCs can extend—Depends upon site conditions as they relate to EQC Policy purposes**
- **Ultimately a negotiation between the County and the developer**



# EQC Protection--Archstone at Van Dorn



Archstone Van Dorn



# Island Creek--P District; EQC Preservation



0 125 250 500 750 1,000 1,250 Feet

Island Creek

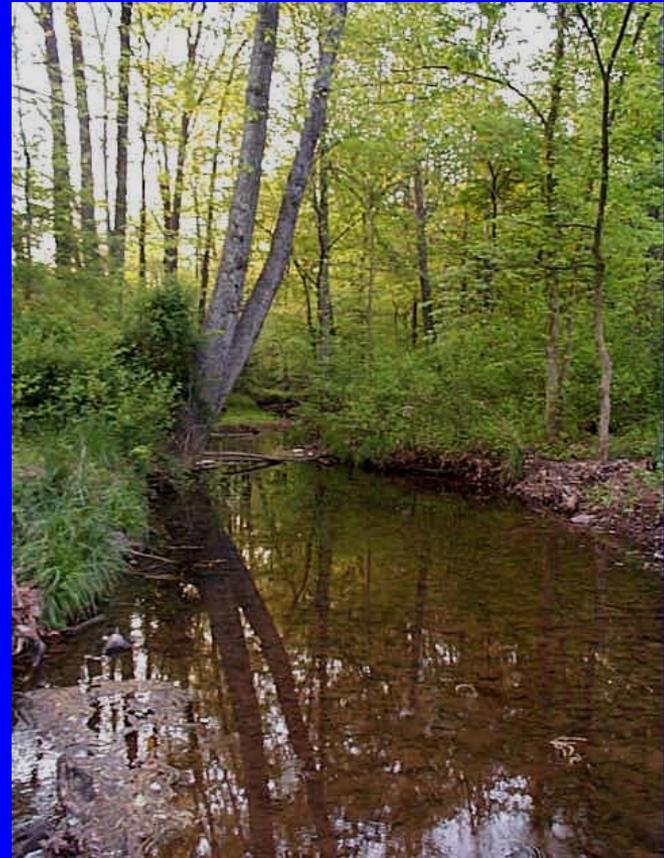


# Supportable Activities in EQC

- **Trails/passive recreation**
- **Road & utility crossings**
- **Regional SWM ponds**

# EQC Administration Issues

- **Density transfer allowed**
- **Determined on a site by site basis**
- **Park Authority or HOA ownership typically recommended**



# Support for EQCs

- **Citizens**
- **Local elected officials**
- **Developers**

# 2008 Policy Plan Amendment

- **Planning Commission Environment Committee/EQAC review of stream protection**
- **Ambiguity in EQC policy as it applies to upper reaches of stream systems**
- **Desire for more explicit policy addressing these areas**

# 2008 Policy Plan Amendment

- **Consideration of expansion of EQC policy vs. general policy support**
- **Potentially conflicting concerns regarding the desire for definitive guidance and the desire for flexibility**
- **Planning Commission recommendation for general policy guidance referencing stream valley EQC approach as a goal**

# Strengthened Regulatory Protection?

- BOS interest in exploring strengthened stream/buffer area protection **requirements** upstream of RPAs
- Under review by Planning Commission Environment Committee in coordination with the Environmental Quality Advisory Council
- Public participation process to begin soon

# Questions/Follow-up?

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