



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 31, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Stella Koch, Chairman
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

SUBJECT: EQAC supports additional tools for management of invasive species

The Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC) supports the Board's upcoming discussions regarding invasive species management in Fairfax County. Additionally, EQAC urges the Board to continue to evaluate options and implement specific actions to address invasives to help move Fairfax County towards a more ecologically sustainable future.

Invasive species pose an increasing threat to our native forests, native wildlife, and the ecological sustainability of our natural areas and result in negative impacts on human health and economies¹. At the state level, discussions are currently being held after the passage of HB527² which established a work group to study the sale and use of invasive plant species. EQAC is excited to hear those related discussions are also happening locally.

Invasive species on private property (such as those used in landscaping) readily and easily escape into natural areas and vice versa. EQAC recognizes the importance of invasive species removal, such as the work being done on County property through the Invasive Management Area program, while at the same time acknowledges that addressing the *source* of invasive plants – turning off the spigot so to speak - is an important initiative as well.

EQAC provides the following three comments:

- **Running bamboo ordinance**
EQAC applauds staff's ongoing discussions pertaining to the development of a Fairfax County ordinance to address running bamboo. With enabling state legislation allowing

¹ <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Threats-to-Wildlife/Invasive-Species>

² <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+HJ527>

this kind of ordinance³, and examples of this authority from both Stafford⁴ and Fauquier⁵ Counties, Fairfax County is well positioned to take additional action to protect our natural lands from this highly invasive plant. We look forward to learning more at the September 28th Board Environmental Committee meeting and to reviewing the language due to be presented to the Legislative Committee this fall.

- **Options to manage all invasive plant species**

EQAC supports exploration into what the County can do to provide further support in the management of all invasive plant species. There are potential equity issues which could arise from an ordinance allowing penalties for landowners not controlling running bamboo. As such, EQAC appreciates staff's broader exploration into a more holistic and more equitable solution to the growing problem of invasive plants, such as the possible creation of a special tax district to assist with funding invasive removal on private property. EQAC looks forward to learning more about this initiative at the September 28th Board Environmental Committee meeting.

- **Funding for invasive water chestnut (Trapa) control in Northern Virginia**

EQAC recommends the Board of Supervisors express support to the Fairfax County delegation in the General Assembly for Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to fund management of this invasive plant, as recommended by Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District in their July 27, 2021 letter to the General Assembly, copying the Board. The supplemental budget recently adopted by the General Assembly did not include funding, but additional funding may be available via DWR in the Governor's next regular budget.

EQAC appreciates the County's recognition of the importance of environmental sustainability. The recently adopted Natural Landscaping Comprehensive Plan Amendment shows the Board's commitment to finding ways to minimize invasive plants on County property while supporting improved ecological habitats, even in a built environment.

In closing, EQAC appreciates the County's research and efforts put towards addressing these complex issues and resulting impacts from invasive plants and look forward to learning more as discussions progress. Thank you for your support in helping to protect our important natural resource capital in the County.

³ Virginia state code: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/15.2-901.1/>

⁴ Stafford County ordinance:

https://library.municode.com/va/stafford_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COCO_CH24VE_ARTIIVE_S24-20CORUBA

⁵ Fauquier County ordinance: <https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=30713>

cc: Camela E. Speer, Director of Communications/Environmental Coordinator,
 Supervisor Dan Storck, Mount Vernon District
 Brian Keightley, Director, Urban Forest Management Division, DPWES
 John Burke, Natural Resources Branch Manager, FCPA
 Christopher Herrington, Director, DPWES
 Jack W. Weyant, Director, Department of Code Compliance
 Matthew Mertz, Code Specialist, Department of Code Compliance
 Aimee L. Vosper, Deputy Director, FCPA
 Patricia Greenberg, Ecologist II, FCPA
 Kambiz Agazi, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination