



Land Development Services

Technical Bulletin

Subject: Tree Canopy Credit Policy – Floodplain and Storm Drainage Easements & Other Utility Easements

Date: September 24, 2025 No.: 25-08

Summary: This technical bulletin clarifies the applicability of 10-year tree canopy credit within areas designated as floodplain and storm drainage easements, as well as other utility easements.

Effective Date: Effective immediately.

Background: Section 12-0310.4E(4) of the Fairfax County Public Facilities Manual (PFM) provides the Director with discretion to deny canopy credit where site conditions or land uses are deemed incompatible with long-term tree viability. Dedicated utility easements (e.g., stormwater conveyance, sanitary sewer, water distribution, power distribution) anticipate ongoing or future disturbance, restricted access, and required clearing activities that directly compromise the long-term health, structure, and ecological value of trees.

Policy Clarification:

In accordance with PFM §12-0310.4E(4), 10-year tree canopy credit will not be granted for trees located within utility easements, including areas that are also mapped as floodplain or as floodplain and storm drainage easements.

- Plan preparers must exclude utility easement areas from canopy credit calculations, regardless of any overlapping designations.
- Canopy credit may still be applied to portions of the floodplain or floodplain and storm drainage easement outside of utility easements, in accordance with PFM §12-0310.3C(1)(a).
- Trees located within utility easements are not eligible for 10-year canopy credit under any circumstances.
- Conservation easements are not included in this prohibition and may remain eligible for credit, subject to applicable standards.

Note: Fairfax County does not regulate dry utilities. This policy applies only to easements shown on approved plans.

Plan Submission Requirements:

- Clearly delineate all easement boundaries on the tree conservation and planting plans.
- Exclude utility easement areas from canopy credit calculations, even if they fall within a mapped floodplain or floodplain and storm drainage easement.
- Design transitional screening and canopy features outside of utility easement areas whenever feasible.

If you have questions or would like to discuss specific site conditions, please contact the Forest Conservation Branch at LDSSDIDAdmin@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-222-0801.

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