



The Fairfax County Tree Commission  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035  
703.324.1770

November 17, 2021

Jeffrey McKay, Chairman  
Dan Storck, Chairman BOS Environmental Committee  
Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
12000 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22035

Sent by email to: [clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov)

RE: Transmission of the Tree Commission (TC) Consolidated Annual Report, July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021  
and TC Recommendations on the County-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan

Dear Chairman McKay, Supervisor Storck, and Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS):

**Transmittal of the Tree Commission Consolidated Annual Report, July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021**

The Fairfax County Tree Commission is pleased to submit its first Consolidated Annual Report covering the period July 2020 to June 2021. This report satisfies three annual reporting requirements to BOS, specifically the (1) 2019 Tree Action Plan, (2) Green Initiatives, and the (3) Tree Commission Charter. This report includes details on the activities of the Community of Practice and important policy recommendations that deserve your priority attention.

**Implementation of the Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP)**

The Tree Commission's Consolidated Annual Report is an important complement to the CECAP report that was accepted by the BOS in September 2021. The Tree Commission applauds the work of the CECAP team's focus on actions that all community members can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the Tree Commission is pleased with the CECAP report's recognition of trees, natural vegetation and soil as a key carbon capture and storage mechanism, as well as a cost effective tool to protect us from the adverse impacts of climate change. We look forward to the CECAP Implementation Plan and the prioritization of actions that should be implemented expeditiously.

For the CECAP implementation plan, the Tree Commission urges the Board of Supervisors to direct staff to assign a high priority to the Actions (p. 145) and Working Group Recommended Activities (pp. 152-154) described in

November 17, 2021

Tree Commission Letter to BOS

Strategy 12 (Natural Resources). In addition, the Tree Commission strongly supports the CECAP goal of expanding green spaces and natural areas, especially forested areas. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that the Fairfax County Park Authority prioritize the establishment of additional protected natural areas and green spaces.

The CECAP Implementation Plan also provides an important opportunity to include Actions and Recommended Activities that are missing from Strategy 8 (Sustainable Land Use). These could be added into the Implementation Plan for Strategy 12, or any other Strategy as appropriate. Sustainable Land Use is a critical component of any Climate Action Plan and we look forward to staff addressing this in the Implementation Plan.

The Tree Commission thanks the Board of Supervisors in advance for acting to implement the policy recommendations in our Consolidated Annual Report. These recommendations will also help achieve the goals established in CECAP Report and contribute to the work of Resilient Fairfax.

Thank you for your continued support for protecting and enhancing Fairfax County's vital urban forest.

Sincerely,



Catherine C. Ledec, Chairman  
Fairfax County Tree Commission

Attachment: Tree Commission Consolidated Annual Report, July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

CC: Fairfax County Planning Commission  
Environmental Quality Advisory Committee  
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive  
Jai Cole, Executive Director, Fairfax County Park Authority



Fairfax County Tree Commission  
Consolidated Annual Report  
July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021



The Fairfax County Tree Commission  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035  
703.324.1770

Approved for Submission to the  
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
September 16, 2021

## **Fairfax County Tree Commission**

Catherine Ledec, Mount Vernon District  
Chairman

Jim McGlone, Virginia Department of Forestry  
Vice Chairman

Cindy Speas, At Large

Jeanne Kadet, Braddock District

Robert Vickers, Dranesville District

Bret Leslie, Hunter Mill District

Jessica Bowser, Lee District

Kevin Holland, Mason District

Laura Beaty, Providence District

Cory Suter, Springfield District

Karen Campblin, Sully District

Rick Healy, Environmental Quality Advisory Council

John Burke, Fairfax County Park Authority

Jerry Peters, Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

Brenda Frank, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service

## **Fairfax County Urban Forest Management Division (UFMD) Staff**

The Tree Commission extends its gratitude to the UFMD staff for their work with us this past year. We look forward to their continued support and their efforts to improve, expand and care for our Urban Forest.

Cover Photo: Fairfax County's urban forest, as seen from the Government Center in Fairfax, Virginia.  
*Photo, Jim McGlone.*

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## Acknowledgements

While the Fairfax County Tree Commission has prepared and is responsible for this report, contributions were made by numerous Fairfax County agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals.

Many of the summaries provided within this report were taken from interviews with representatives from the county agencies and organizations listed below. These organizations and groups are members of the Community of Practice (COP) as established by the 2019 Tree Action Plan and are actively engaged in tree planting and related activities in the county. This report is a snapshot of tree-related work done in Fairfax County during the period of review, and it is possible that information may have been omitted during its preparation. We look forward to including missed material in the next edition.

The Fairfax County Tree Commission extends its appreciation to the following organizations that contributed to this report:

Audubon Naturalist Society

Burke Conservancy

Casey Trees

Earth Sangha, Inc.

Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division, DPWES

Fairfax County Urban Forest Management Division, DPWES

Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council

Invasive Management Area program, FCPA

Natural Resources Management Division, FCPA

Fairfax ReLeaf

McLean Trees Foundation

Members of the Community of Practice

Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

Plant NOVA Natives

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Department of Forestry

Virginia Native Plant Society

## Introduction

This report has been prepared by members of the Fairfax County Tree Commission (Tree Commission), with UFMD staff support for formatting and layout.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of what is happening with respect to tree preservation, planting, and related activities across Fairfax County and to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on these matters. We also provide this information to interested stakeholders and members of the public, many of whom are taking actions to maintain and increase our urban forest as evidenced by the findings reported herein.



Fall foliage at Huntley Meadows Park, one of Fairfax County's largest protected forest areas.

*Photo, Nancy Tyler.*

This is the first consolidated annual report of the Tree Commission. It includes the reporting requirements defined in (1) the 2019 Tree Action Plan, (2) Fairfax Green Initiatives item #5A, and (3) the Tree Commission Charter. Any future reporting requested from the Tree Commission will be, where possible, incorporated into this consolidated annual report, which will be submitted to the BOS annually in the fall. We would be pleased to provide any additional ad hoc reporting as needed.

Chapters are organized by major themes identified as priority areas in the BOS approved 2019 Tree Action Plan. Activities described herein primarily cover the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. However, since this is our first consolidated annual report, there may be some additions from outside of this timeframe where it is important to include an action or policy. Chapter 9 provides our policy recommendations to September 2, 2021.

### **The Value of Trees**

Trees provide numerous ecosystem benefits that support Fairfax residents, including reduced urban heat island effects, improved health and well-being, reduced energy costs, fewer air pollutants, improved stormwater absorption and filtration, better erosion control, noise buffering, increased biodiversity, and more. Globally, we are at a crisis point with the loss of biodiversity, much of which is dependent on trees<sup>1</sup>. This is especially true in urbanized areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. International Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Secretariat, Bonn, Germany, 2019.

[https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/spm\\_unedited\\_advance\\_for\\_posting\\_htn.pdf](https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/spm_unedited_advance_for_posting_htn.pdf)

For these reasons trees are important for a healthy lifestyle as promoted by Fairfax County for our quality of life, that of future generations, and to attract new residents and businesses.

Many cities are pursuing large tree planting campaigns including the conversion of pavement to tree planting spaces.<sup>2 3 4</sup> Fairfax County would also benefit from this approach. (See Appendix 1.) The county would also benefit from long-term funding for a county-wide native tree planting campaign on public and private land, with a priority focus and equity lens on areas of high socioeconomic need using the county's Vulnerability Index.<sup>5</sup> (See Appendices 6 and 7.) This would protect us from some of the impacts of climate change and support the healthier living experience that all county residents seek and deserve.

### Trees and Land Use Changes

Land use changes, on both public and private property, provide an opportunity for improving environmental conditions through the preservation of mature trees, and planting trees to increase diversity and restore ecological balance. Decision-making that includes trees as an essential element in all land use decisions is a key component in reducing the impacts of climate change and improving our environment. Our built and natural environments are interconnected and interdependent. Properly siting buildings and gray infrastructure (e.g., stormwater pipes, parking lots, utility corridors) involves due consideration for preservation of mature trees and providing adequate space for planting new trees, ensuring the perpetuation of the county's green infrastructure, our urban forest. This approach to land use will result in greater benefits from both the built and natural environment. (See Appendix 7.)

The Tree Commission eagerly awaits a tree canopy survey in 2022 to help guide our work to improve, protect, and expand the county's urban forest. Protecting and expanding our tree



canopy helps keep Fairfax County a safe, resilient, and healthy place to live.

We thank the Board of Supervisors for their support of the county's urban forest and look forward to the implementation of our recommendations. (See Chapter 9.)

Trees sustain Fairfax County's high quality of life and help reduce the adverse impacts of climate change, including the urban heat island effect. *Photo unknown.*

<sup>2</sup> Hanes, S. "How Baltimore is Saving Urban Forests and its City." *Christian Science Monitor*, June 19, 2019. <https://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2019/0610/How-Baltimore-is-saving-urban-forests-and-its-city>.

<sup>3</sup> Corbley, Andy. "Madrid to Create Perimeter Forest Around the City to Absorb Heat and CO2." <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/madrid-to-create-perimeter-forest-around-the-city-to-absorb-heat-and-co2/>

<sup>4</sup> Tree Equity: <https://news.usc.edu/185299/usc-urban-tree-initiative-shade-heat-waves-los-angeles-eastside/>

<sup>5</sup> Fairfax County Vulnerability Index: <https://fairfaxcountygis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4b93c4fb7998471fb218bd98d2a767fb>



## Chapter 1: Guiding Policies and Initiatives

The Tree Commission’s work is guided by its Charter, the Fairfax Green Initiatives Board Matter and, most recently, by the 2019 Tree Action Plan. These principles frame the Commission’s agenda, discussions, and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS).

### **Tree Commission Charter<sup>6</sup>**

The Tree Commission’s original charter was approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1973. The purpose of the Tree Commission is to:

Provide advice to the Board of Supervisors, based on an annual reevaluation of the administration and implementation of the provisions set forth in this Ordinance and the landscaping and screening requirements contained in the Zoning Ordinance; to provide leadership in developing an understanding of the objectives and methods of tree conservation; and to assist the Urban Forest Management Division of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and Land Development Services in the development and maintenance of technical specifications and guidelines.

(See Chapter 8 for the annual report that is required in the Tree Commission’s Charter.)

### **Fairfax Green Initiatives Board Matter<sup>7</sup>**

On February 5, 2019, the BOS unanimously approved the Fairfax Green Initiatives Board Matter (Fairfax Green Initiatives). Action 5 charged the Tree Commission to recommend “low-cost and no cost options” for citizen tree planting in Fairfax County and to report annually to the BOS on progress and accomplishments.

(See Appendix 1 for the Annual Report on the Fairfax Green Initiatives sent to the BOS on June 28, 2021. Those recommendations are re-stated in Chapter 9.)

### **2019 Tree Action Plan<sup>8</sup>**

The 2019 Tree Action Plan (TAP) was updated by the Tree Commission and approved by the Fairfax County BOS at the end of 2019. The goals described therein will be achieved through greater involvement of key government agencies, private organizations, and county residents in tree-related work across the county. The TAP describes the stewardship necessary to maintain our urban forest, and this is arranged around five framework goals:

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<sup>6</sup> [Tree Commission Charter - CHAPTER 122. Tree Conservation Ordinance. | Code of Ordinances | Fairfax County, VA | Municode Library](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Fairfax Green Initiatives Board Matters #1 and #2 - https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/fairfax-green-initiatives](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/fairfax-green-initiatives)

<sup>8</sup> [Tree Action Plan - https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/treeactionplan.pdf](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/treeactionplan.pdf)

1. Know what we have;
2. Protect and improve what we have;
3. Expand what we have;
4. Improve urban forestry policies and processes; and
5. Communicate and build partnerships.

Under these five goals, a series of core recommendations specify actions needed to better manage our urban forest. Public and private stakeholders in the TAP have established a Community of Practice, a key contributor to achieving the goals described in the plan. This report includes numerous references to tree-related project work completed, or in process, by members of the Community of Practice.

(See Chapters 2-6 for the annual report on the Tree Action Plan.)

## Chapter 2: Know What We Have

To *know what we have*, we must assess the condition of the trees, forests, and non-forest vegetative cover to determine their composition and health. The assessment process includes conducting inventories to determine vegetative cover types and condition, monitoring to measure forest change, and evaluating the success of management efforts. The inventory and monitoring efforts include periodic assessments such as land cover change analysis and i-Tree ecosystem analysis, as well as ongoing programs such as those conducted by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) and Urban Forest Management Division (UFMD).



Native trees, such as this mature Willow Oak, provide valuable ecosystem services including shade, stormwater management and wildlife habitat. *Photo, Cathy Ledec.*

Conducting periodic assessments every five years is common practice in urban forestry. The last land cover change analysis for the county was completed in 2017 and assessed changes from 2011 to 2015. The analysis, which used high resolution satellite imagery and LiDAR data, determined that 57% of the county's total area was covered by tree canopy. During the reporting period, UFMD contracted for aerial high-resolution imaging as the basis for land cover change analysis. This imaging of the canopy is only possible during full leaf conditions. After acquiring the imagery, analysis of the imagery and LiDAR data will need to be completed, so the next land cover change analysis report is at least a year away.

FCPA continues to conduct extensive vegetation inventory work on the roughly 25,000 acres of county lands that it manages. The Non-Native Invasive Assessment Prioritization (NNIAP) program maps the severity of invasive plants in forested areas of FCPA lands. The field data

collection for this effort occurs in the summer, and all FCPA properties are completely assessed on a rolling basis once every six years. In fiscal year 2020, the program was paused due to impacts of COVID-19 and has since resumed for summer 2021. Natural community type and condition are also assessed as part of FCPA's Western Area Natural Resources Management Plan. This effort uses field-collected data on plant species (including trees) to assign park areas to a specific Natural Community of Virginia as defined by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). In FY2021, survey work on natural communities was completed for all parks in the western portion of Fairfax County. These vegetation assessments and the associated community types will be summarized in the forthcoming Western Area Natural Resources Management Plan. Work on assessing parks in the northern portion of the county has since commenced. These assessments and the accompanying natural resource management plans inform site selection and management decisions for FCPA's ecological restoration program, "Helping our Land Heal." In addition, FCPA continues to survey for rare plants and communities to avoid damage to these valuable natural resources throughout the county and on parcels slated for development.

UFMD and FCPA continue to expand on existing inventory programs to achieve a complete picture of how the county's forests are growing and changing. County agencies rely heavily on this data to design evolving management and maintenance strategies for Fairfax's forests, open spaces, and natural landscapes. These assessments are essential to our understanding what is needed to manage these resources, ensuring the benefits they provide, and to *know what we have*.

## Chapter 3: Protect and Improve What We Have

Urban forest resources, including meadows and edge ecosystems as well as forests and individual trees, need to be managed over time *to protect and improve what we have*. We must reduce or minimize stressors, maintain the health of the trees and other species, and ensure they continue to provide valuable environmental services. Both county and state have new policies that improve protections for our tree canopy, but there are continuing challenges such as how to manage stormwater, preserve trees during land disturbance, reduce deer incursion, control pests, and control invasive plants. We must take advantage of educational opportunities to help meet these challenges.

New regulatory changes for natural area preservation, including trees, that were strengthened during the reporting period include: revisions to the Fairfax County Chesapeake Bay Ordinance and Public Facilities Manual (Chapter 12 – Tree Preservation.) adopted June 22, 2021; amendments to the Chesapeake Bay Act emphasizing protection of mature trees within Resource Protection Areas; and the Comprehensive Plan Policy Amendment for Natural Landscaping on County Properties. (See Chapter 6 and footnote 17 for more details.)

### **Stormwater Runoff Reduction by Trees and Natural Areas**

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), funded by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and implemented by the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD), provides matching grants for a variety of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) primarily on residential properties. NVSWCD also implements the Fairfax County-funded Conservation Assistance Program (CAP) which provides matching grants for stormwater BMPs and energy saving devices on community and church properties. Many of the funded VCAP and CAP projects involve planting trees and other natural landscaping. These projects, implemented at locations across Fairfax County demonstrate good land stewardship that benefits many neighborhoods. (See Chapter 6.)

Fairfax County's watershed management plans, developed and implemented by the Stormwater Management Program (SMP), address problems of declining water quality and environmental degradation. The plans include proposed actions that preserve stream habitats from disturbance, and some include trees. Projects are identified through the Stormwater Capital Improvement Program which is updated annually. In addition to greater improvement in water quality, these projects should be prioritized by ratings in the County's Vulnerability Index (see footnote 5) with equity in mind. (See Chapter 9: Other Policy Recommendations.)

During stormwater projects, some trees and other vegetation are unavoidably lost. Where practicable, loss of forests is mitigated. For example, during 2020, the Fairfax County partnered with the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) to replace 10 acres of forest lost due to impacts from the Huntington Levee construction by planting 10 acres of forest cover at five park sites distributed around the county. Those 10 acres will be protected and managed in perpetuity as

forest under agreement between Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and FCPA.

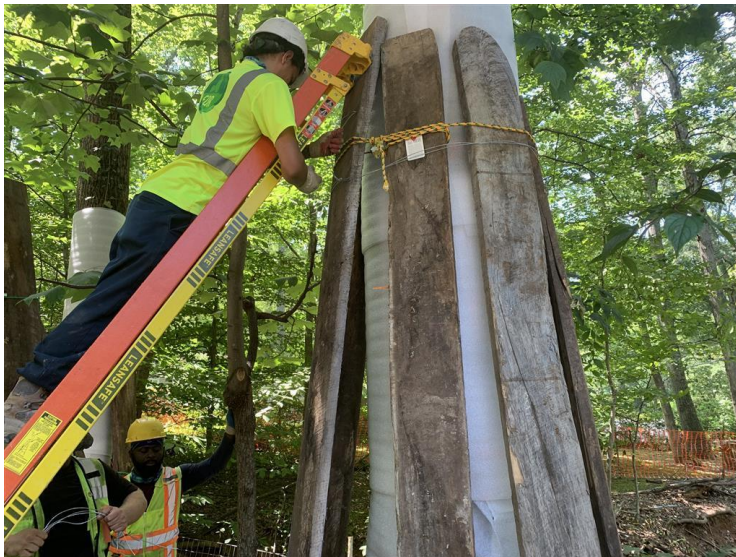
The SMP has converted former mowed turf areas to meadow, tree cover, and forest through a variety of partnership activities at county properties including:

- Creation of meadow areas at the Fairfax County Government Center, Americana Park, and the Alban Road Division of Vehicle Services site.
- In 2020 and 2021, plantings were done using pro-rata share funds at Gunston Hall, Bull Run Marina and on HOA property in the Wolf Run drainage.
- Natural landscaping projects have been implemented at the Herrity Fountain, Government Center ellipse stairs, and Kings Park West library.

Additionally, Phase III of Virginia’s Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) sets the Total Daily Maximum Load (TMDL) for nutrients and sediments entering the Chesapeake Bay, minimizes disturbance of soil and vegetation, and sets goals for the total number of trees to be planted. The Virginia Department of Forestry developed My Trees Count for recording tree planting data to help meet these new guidelines. This web form is accessible at #mytreescount.<sup>9</sup>

### **Preserving Tree Canopy During Construction and Other Land Disturbance Projects**

In April 2020, the SPD initiated new tree protection measures during construction projects as recommended by UFMD staff. These new techniques are being added to projects currently in design. An example of a tree protection measure is armoring tree trunks as illustrated below.



Environmental Quality Control staff installing a new type of tree protection measure. Instead of fabric, reusable closed cell foam is inserted between the planks and bark of the tree to absorb any shock if the tree is accidentally hit by construction traffic. Trees within 5 feet of the limits of disturbance will have tree armoring to prevent accidental damage.

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<sup>9</sup> [#MyTreesCount](https://www.instagram.com/mytreescount/)

<https://vdof.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=f41f85765879480cab068547645d9d8e>

In spring 2020, staff completed comprehensive reviews of the stormwater capital project design process and recommended improvements in details, practices, and graphics. Also, their review of construction specifications resulted in improvements in review of contractor submittals, warranty, and materials requirements.

In the summer of 2020, the SPD also initiated a long-term monitoring project on the outcome of trees in tree save areas. These changes better protect remaining trees, improve the effectiveness of invasive species control efforts, and improve the survival and performance of restoration plantings.

### **Protecting the Urban Forest from Deer Over-browsing**

Another major threat to the health of Fairfax County's forests is the overabundant population of white-tailed deer. Hunting deer is legal across the county and resulted in 1,684 harvests during the Fall 2020 through Spring 2021 seasons. The Animal Control Division's Deer Management Program in many Fairfax County parks, and other participating properties, saw 605 volunteer archers achieve 823 harvests. In addition, 56 deer were taken during sharpshooting operations in six selected county parks. Thus, the Program's 879 total harvests accounted for 52% of the total by all hunters across the county during the specified seasons.

### **Protecting the Urban Forest from Pests**

The Forest Pest Management Branch (Forest Pest) is a county office cooperating with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Fairfax County has one of the largest and most active forest pest protection staffs in the country. As the threat from gypsy moth has waned, staff has diligently worked to protect the urban forest from other forest pests and pest-borne diseases.

VDACS maintains a list of pests currently eligible for control by the Forest Pest Branch: the gypsy moth, cankerworm, emerald ash borer, hemlock woolly adelgid, Asian long-horned beetle, spotted lanternfly, sudden oak death, and thousand cankers disease. Staff implements the monitoring and treatment for the listed forest pests, and partners with other government agencies to assist with monitoring and treatment programs for emerald ash borer and spotted lanternfly. In 2020, six county sites were managed for this last pest and its non-native host tree, Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Due to the ongoing spotted lanternfly threat, county staff has inventoried thousands of *Ailanthus* on county land for future contracted treatments.

Forest Pest conducts an active outreach/public education program targeting school and civic groups, and the public at large to promote the benefits of healthy trees and forests. These efforts include county podcasts, social media events, internal county publications, and write-ups used for various community newsletters. Most recently, Forest Pest, in cooperation with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and Virginia Department of Forestry, hosted two webinars with approximately 300 people participating.

## Protecting the Urban Forest from Invasive Plants

Similarly, invasive plants present a pressing threat to the health and abundance of trees in Fairfax County. Over the past year, FCPA's Invasive Management Area (IMA) program continued to work with resident volunteers to control invasive plants on parkland. In FY21, 48 IMA volunteer site leaders led volunteer groups through 753 invasive removal workdays at parks throughout the county. In total 2,243 volunteers worked for 9,449.6 hours to remove nearly 3,000 trash bags of invasive plants from FCPA property.



Volunteers at Mount Eagle Park remove English Ivy, a non-native invasive species that threatens the survival of many urban trees in Fairfax County. *Photo, Cathy Ledec.*

The FCPA also has a program to restore natural areas on park lands called "Helping Our Land Heal." This rebuilds, repairs, and maintains quality natural areas. These projects should also be prioritized in neighborhoods that score high on the Vulnerability Index with equity in mind. (See footnote 5 and Chapter 9: Other Policy Recommendations.) Projects underway during 2020-2021 included:

- Ellanor C. Lawrence Forest Restoration
- Elk Lick Preserve Forest and Grassland Restoration
- Fitzhugh Park Ecological Restoration



- Laurel Hill Forest Restoration
- Old Colchester Park and Preserve Restoration
- Riverbend Park Meadow Restoration

### Protecting the Urban Forest Through Public Education

A critical component of protecting forests and managing natural landscaping on private properties is landowner education on these practices. Plant NOVA Natives is the joint marketing campaign of a coalition of non-profit, governmental, and private groups working to reverse the decline of native plants (including trees) and wildlife in Northern Virginia. Information about native plants, where they belong in our landscape, and where they can be obtained is offered by Plant NOVA Natives on their web site, in a printed guide, and at planned events.

The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) promotes natural landscaping including invasive plant management and use of native plants through a variety of educational opportunities:

- Annual spring sale of native seedlings – includes giving every purchaser the Tree Commission’s manual “Fairfax County Tree Basics.”
- Green Breakfasts – NVSWCD hosts several Saturday morning Green Breakfasts each year. Traditionally held in person, the 109<sup>th</sup> Green Breakfast on in May was presented virtually. Patricia Greenberg, Ecologist and Invasive Management Area (IMA) Program Manager with the Fairfax County Park Authority presented “Common Invasive Plants and How to Manage Them in Your Yard”. It was attended by 87 people.
- Annual Sustainable Garden Tour – In June of 2020 and in 2021, the Tour was presented virtually. Links to video presentations from 24 residences across Fairfax County remain available on NVSWCD’s web site. The natural landscaping on these properties demonstrates how attractive this approach to gardening can be. There were 2,032 virtual visitors who viewed tour site videos during the first 30 days in June of 2021.



There is a need to scale up native tree planting initiatives like this successful event recently held in the Gum Springs Community, Mount Vernon District. *Photo, Cory Suter.*

- Webinars – In conjunction with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and Arlington County, NVSWCD staff presented “How to Build a Rain Garden” to approximately 155 registrants in January. The presentation was recorded and posted on YouTube where it has been viewed 392 times to date. Similar webinars were recorded at presentations to the Kings Park West Civic Association in May and at a Plant NOVA Natives “Ask an Expert” series event in June. These webinars specified the use of natives and discusses the dangers of invasive plants.
- Website publications – NVSWCD has promoted invasive plant management and use of native plants for years. Publications available on the NVSWCD web site demonstrate their support for these pillars of landscape management, such as their “Residential Low Impact Landscaping Guide, downloaded 487 times, and their “Rain Garden Design and Construction Guide for Homeowners”, downloaded 5,040 times during the reporting period.

Additional efforts are underway through the Tree Commission’s work on convening the Community of Practice (COP) to establish a regular reporting mechanism for COP members to report annually to the Tree Commission on tree-related activities. With the assistance of county staff, the Implementation Matrix (see Appendix 2) will be distributed electronically to COP members, and data on achievements will be combined and included in future annual reports of the Tree Commission. This will be needed to ensure that gap areas identified in the analysis are discussed and, where possible, actions recommended are implemented by COP members.

Fairfax County efforts to protect and improve our urban forest during the past year are extensive and ongoing. They are important for the continued regeneration and expansion of our existing canopy and other natural resources. Many ecosystem benefits of our forests rely on a complex interaction of components, including large trees in the canopy, young trees and shrubs in the understory, and small plants and native grasses that make up the ground cover. Long term protection and expansion requires not only careful land development and new plantings, but attention to the threats from invasive plants, forest pests and diseases, and continued education and outreach to the public about actions that can be taken to *protect and improve what we have*.

## Chapter 4: Expand What We Have

Member organizations and government agencies of the Community of Practice (COP) have a key role in *expanding what we have*. Tree planting success will depend on an ongoing low-cost or no-cost supply of good quality native tree seedlings, guidance and technical assistance on good tree planting practices, and ongoing maintenance (by staff or well-trained volunteers) to help ensure the long-term success of planted trees.

With continued development in the county, it is essential to be creative about making space for tree preservation and planting early in the development planning process. Key to expanding our urban forest is engaging with property owners and managers to plant more trees on corporate grounds, homeowner association common open spaces, school sites, faith community properties, and underserved areas of the county. The Plant NOVA Natives campaign has initiated a 5-year program (Plant NOVA Trees) to plant more native trees in our region by reaching out to the above-mentioned groups, as well as individual homeowners. Including more than 140 member organizations, this campaign will bring together a diverse and large group of action-oriented volunteers around the need for tree planting across Fairfax County. The campaign will launch in the fall of 2021. A suite of resource materials will be available on their web site that will help guide efforts throughout the county resulting in tree planting that expands what we have. Data collected from tree planting efforts, reporting on education and outreach activities, and other results of these efforts will be included in next year's annual report.

Increasingly, as trees are viewed as a significant resource to help offset carbon emissions and the impacts of climate change, the continued availability of low-cost or no-cost Northern Virginia regionally native trees will be a key concern. Most of the seedlings used by the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOT) come from the state-run Augusta Forestry Center in Crimora, Virginia. Recognizing the quickly expanding need for more native tree seedlings, the 2022-2023 biennial budget, passed by the Virginia General Assembly and signed by Gov. Ralph Northam, increased by \$290,000 the funds allocated to the VDOT to expand operations at the nursery. Continued support and funding for expanding the growing of regionally appropriate and climate resilient native tree seedlings for tree planting projects will be very important.<sup>10</sup>

The Tree Commission looks forward to upcoming revisions to the county's Chesapeake Bay Ordinance and to the Public Facilities Manual (Chapter 12-Tree Preservation) adopted June 22, 2021. This ordinance change will result in better survival rates of trees planted, *expanding what we have*. (See Chapter 6 and footnote 17 for details.)

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<sup>10</sup> [Vogelsong, S. 2021](#). "Policymakers are banking on trees to cut carbon. Forest experts say Virginia needs more seedlings" Virginia Mercury, June 1, 2021.

A questionnaire (see below) was emailed to many COP members with a request for information related to their tree planting efforts from June 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Questionnaire that was emailed to a sample of Community of Practice members:

We are tasked to write an annual report to the Board of Supervisors, including describing tree planting efforts in the county by community and government groups (aka the Community of Practice). Would you be so kind as to fill in the below information that could be included in our report, which covers tree planting during the period from **June 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021**? If there is additional related information that does not include the questions I have asked, please feel free to include that information too.

I look forward to your response before June 30, if possible.

Number of tree planting events:

Number of trees planted: your seedlings/trees:

Type of follow up for maintaining new trees (brief description):

Special challenges you encountered, and possible ideas for improving (i.e., not having adequate supply of seedlings, not enough volunteers, high fail rates, etc.):

Planting projects for the upcoming year:

Thank you for your help and please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.



This nursery, a partnership between the Fairfax County Park Authority and Earth Sangha, is an important source of native tree seedlings locally adapted to our region. *Photo Earth Sangha.*

With tree planting efforts severely impacted by Covid 19, the number of projects that took place in the past year is impressive. Here is a snapshot of information the Commission has received thus far:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Burke Conservancy                                      | 15 events; 301 bare root seedlings and three 4-foot trees; biggest challenge was recruiting enough volunteers for follow up.  |
| Casey Trees Pilot Project                              | Route 1 Corridor): trees plantings on private properties with low/no canopy, plan to plant a total of 150 trees. Pilot also includes an ‘outreach’ portion.   |
| Earth Sangha   | 6,009 trees planted within Fairfax County: 438 installed by Earth Sangha and 5,571 distributed at low cost for others to plant—parks, schools, churches, and homeowners. Anticipate possibly more than 7,500 trees distributed next year, driven by demand from Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and Fairfax County Park Authority.  |
| Fairfax ReLeaf   | Six tree planting events; 5,254 trees planted, sourced primarily by VDOF; a few parks and Homeowners Associations (HOAs) are lined up for volunteer projects in FY 2022   |
| McLean Trees Foundation (MTF)                          | Two events; 14 trees in four local parks; 13 trees under the Neighborhood Tree Program; All trees were a minimum of 1” caliper. MTF does not plant seedling due to high failure rate.   |
| Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District | 6,496 seedlings were distributed in this year’s annual seedling sale; in partnership with FCPA’s Invasive Management Area program participated in 14 tree planting events planting 555 seedlings in targeted areas with medium-high vulnerability and low tree canopy coverage; contributed 620 seedlings to FCPA for Natural Resource Restoration Projects. The seedling sale will be offered again in FY2022. |
| Tree Preservation and Planting Fund                    | 15 grants, 145 trees planted. Most of these trees were planted at Fairfax County Public Schools with student participation. These projects contributed to goals for public education.   |
| VA Dept. of Forestry                                   | Received 6,000 seedlings: 1,500 went to Fairfax County Facilities Management Department to plant on county owned property throughout the county   |

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Virginia Native Plant Society  | Replanting rescued plants, primarily understory vegetation, includes donations to FCPA for their use in county property plantings.                    |
| VA Trees for Clean Water grant | Restoration tree plan at Frying Pan Farm Park; 500 of the 1,500 seedlings that were given to Fairfax County from VDOF have been planted in park land. |

Each of these projects has successfully helped the county achieve the 2019 Tree Action Plan goal to *expand what we have*.

## Chapter 5: Improve Urban Forest Policies and Processes

Trees and green infrastructure provide natural carbon storage and carbon sequestration that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time removing non-carbon air pollutants, helping to manage storm water, and providing psychological and physiological health benefits. Trees reduce heat island effects and social vulnerability and promote environmental justice. Tree planting is also a cost-effective way for homeowners to address climate change. At the same time, trees do not incur the environmental costs of the production, deployment and disposal of solar panels, wind turbines, storage batteries and energy efficiency technologies. Trees may not be the full answer to climate change, but they are an underutilized and important part of the answer to many climate, environmental, social, and health-related questions and concerns.

Fairfax County is using all *urban forest policies and processes* to protect trees currently authorized by state enabling legislation.<sup>11</sup> These include:

- Tree Action Plan 2019 Part 2: Urban Forest Management Plan (see footnote 10)
- Natural Landscaping Policy at County Facilities<sup>12</sup>
- Virginia Conservation Assistance Program<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [Code of Virginia: Conservation of Trees](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title15.2/chapter9/section15.2-961.1/) - <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title15.2/chapter9/section15.2-961.1/>

<sup>12</sup> [Natural Landscaping in Fairfax County](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/plan-amendments/natural-landscaping) - <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/plan-amendments/natural-landscaping>

<sup>13</sup> [Virginia Conservation Assistance Program](https://vaswcd.org/vcap) - <https://vaswcd.org/vcap>

- Fairfax Green Initiatives Board Matter of February 5, 2019 (see footnote 9)
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Protection Act Amendments passed June 2021 and currently proposed amendments to protect and improve the long-term health of mature trees in Resource Protection Areas.<sup>14 15</sup>

The county is currently engaged in climate change planning, both to avoid climate change effects through carbon reductions (Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, CECAP) and to promote climate resiliency (Resilient Fairfax: Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan). During the reporting period, the CECAP process focused mainly on energy use and transportation-related solutions to these problems, with very limited coverage of the importance of naturally stored carbon and the role that trees and natural resources play in retaining this carbon sink. The role of trees in reducing carbon emissions and removing carbon from the air was mentioned in the draft CECAP report<sup>16</sup>. The Tree Commission plans to review and comment on the final CECAP report.

An issue in Fairfax County and other older suburban communities in Virginia is infill and tear down/rebuild development. This type of redevelopment leads to changes in the character of neighborhoods, as mature trees that have grown up since the original development are removed to make way for new houses. It is not clear that current state tree canopy legislation adequately addresses canopy retention in this type of redevelopment. In the 2021 session of the Virginia General Assembly, HB 2024 was introduced that would have amended state legislation to allow localities to exceed state set canopy requirements under certain circumstances. This bill was ultimately tabled pending the outcome of a stakeholder group to examine all state tree-related legislation. The stakeholder group represents a potential opportunity since it could recommend additional authority to regulate trees during development. However, it could also recommend rolling back that authority (which would be counterproductive from an urban forest management standpoint).

In June 2020 the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors amended the county's Comprehensive Plan to apply low impact development practices and natural landscaping methods in design, retrofit and maintenance of public facilities. The goals are minimizing resource consumption, reducing stormwater runoff, decreasing life-cycle maintenance requirements, increasing the habitat value of each site, and increasing soil and plant health. To showcase results on the ground and help lead by example, Fairfax County implemented Phase I of a project at the County Government Center to demonstrate natural landscaping practices and results.

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<sup>14</sup> [Chesapeake Bay Ordinance and Public Facilities Manual - https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/sites/landdevelopment/files/assets/documents/pdf/pfm/chapter-118-cbay-preservation-ordinance-amendment-effective-6-23-2021.pdf](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/sites/landdevelopment/files/assets/documents/pdf/pfm/chapter-118-cbay-preservation-ordinance-amendment-effective-6-23-2021.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [Proposed CBPA amendments for 2022: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/march16-land-use-presentation-deq-amendments.pdf](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/march16-land-use-presentation-deq-amendments.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [Countywide Energy and Climate Action Plan \(CECAP\): https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/cecrap](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/cecrap)

Implementation of Phase II of this initiative is in the budget for FY 2022. County nuisance and health ordinances should be updated to ensure consistency with this new policy on natural landscaping. (See Chapter 9: Recommendations.)

A Stormwater Management Fund is being implemented in Fairfax County using recently approved state enabling authority. This fund, in addition to the current Virginia Conservation Action Plan (VCAP), would allow the county to provide more financial assistance to address storm water issues on private lands. As such, a Storm Water Management Fund (Fund) could supplement existing county and state monies used to support tree planting, along with the conversion of turf grass lawns to natural landscaping. This Fund would support a variety of county policies like One Fairfax and the Fairfax Green Initiatives, along with meeting regulatory requirements under storm water management permits and water quality goals. While providing additional funds for tree planting and natural landscaping is certainly needed, the most important current bottleneck is in providing high-quality technical assistance and oversight in the disbursement of these funds. Most of the VCAP technical work falls on the staff of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD), and the new Fund tasks will be under UFMD. Both agencies lack sufficient staff to oversee these projects. Funds for additional staff are needed to get more projects in the ground.

While there is much work to be done, the Tree Commission continues to actively advise the Board of Supervisors on when and how to *improve urban forest policies and processes throughout the reporting period*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [Fairfax County Tree Conservation Ordinance: https://library.municode.com/va/fairfax\\_county/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=THCOCOF1976\\_CH122TR](https://library.municode.com/va/fairfax_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=THCOCOF1976_CH122TR)



## Chapter 6: Communicate and Build Partnerships

The Tree Commission has been engaged in improving communication and building partnerships among the Community of Practice that is maintaining and managing the urban forest. The following projects are examples of these partnerships that are furthering mutual goals.

**Community of Practice:** In March 2020 the Tree Commission hosted a Tree Planting Charette, the first convening of the Community of Practice (COP). The attendees included more than 30 non-profit and governmental stakeholders involved in tree planting activities in Fairfax County. The charette provided attendees with an opportunity to share vision and goals, discuss tree planting activities including successes and challenges, and identify areas of opportunity for tree planting. The second meeting of the COP was hosted by the Tree Commission on May 13, 2021, via Zoom. More than 30 organizations and government agencies were represented. This knowledge sharing event included discussion of goals and objectives for tree planting and identifying measurable data points that could be used to report on the work of the COP on tree planting, including any challenges occurring on implementation. The Tree Commission plans on continuing to actively engage with the COP going forward in the hopes of connecting attendees with technical experts in forestry and providing links to other organizations where collaboration will bring greater benefit to each group's work.

**Tree planting along Richmond Highway Corridor:** The Fairfax County Urban Forestry Management Division (UFMD) entered into a pilot project with Casey Trees, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., to plant trees on residential properties in neighborhoods surrounding the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District (Route 1). Casey Trees will plant a selection of 150 native tree species and meet with the homeowners to assess the sites and select the trees. The residents will maintain the trees.

Coincidentally, the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS) received a grant from the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia for watershed education and conservation programs along the Route 1 corridor, to begin with tree planting. UFMD plans to partner with ANS to plant trees for residents along Little Hunting Creek.

**Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) Tree Planting Partnership:** UFMD used grants from the Tree Planting and Preservation Fund to work with teachers and students at 8 schools to plant 109 trees on school property. This included classroom study of arboriculture and the environmental benefits of trees. A significant number of these schools are identified as Title 1 schools.



**Virginia Tech Soil Study:** UFMD contracted with the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences of Virginia Tech to perform a study of soil media and tree planting designs in Fairfax County and provide detailed recommendations for future tree planting methods and media components.

**Trees in Parks:** In partnership with the Fairfax County Park Authority's (FCPA) Invasive Management Area (IMA) program, the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) held 14 tree planting events in parks in targeted areas with medium-high vulnerability and low tree canopy coverage. 555 trees were planted and another 620 were provided to the FCPA for natural resource restoration projects.

Also, volunteers with the McLean Trees Foundation (MTF), in partnership with the Fairfax County Park Authority, planted 14 native trees (min.1" caliper) in Lewinsville, Churchill Road, Fallstaff, and McLean Central Parks. MTF and corporate volunteers, tree stewards, Fairfax County Master Gardeners, and community volunteers also watered, pruned, edged, and mulched these trees as well as previously planted trees.

**Mount Vernon Governmental Center Natural Landscaping Project:** This volunteer-led effort transformed the landscaping around the Mount Vernon Government Center from turf grass to a landscape filled with diverse native trees, shrubs, and perennials. Grants funding this project are from the NVSWCD's Virginia Conservation Action Program (VCAP), Earth Sangha's Plant Grant, and private donations. Earth Sangha, Nature-by-Design, and Merrifield Garden Center supplied native plants.

These plantings are highly visible along the side and front of the building. The mulched planting beds reduce the urban heat island effect, enhance the environment for visitors and workers at the site, improve stormwater management, provide food and habitat for pollinators, and inspire others to replicate this beautiful, natural landscape.

Mount Vernon Government Center



Before

After →

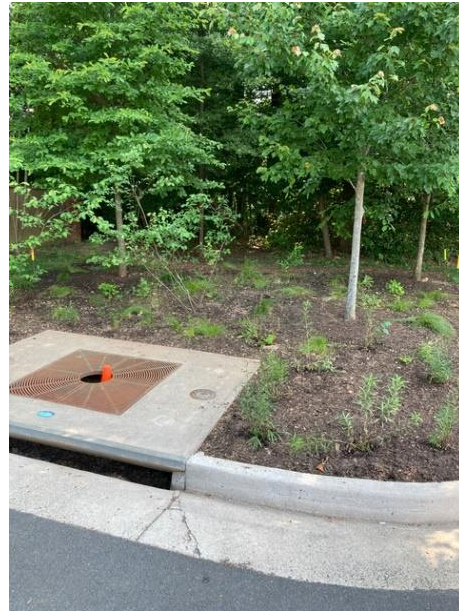


**Providence Governmental Center Landscaping Project:** The Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society and members of local garden clubs worked with Providence Supervisor Dalia Palchik and county officials to transform a section of land adjacent to the Providence Community Center from turf to native plants. Earlier in the year, UFMD planted native trees at the site using the Tree Planting and Preservation Fund. The understory native shrubs, ferns, sedges, and perennials were rescued by the Virginia Native Plant Society from a site threatened by building development. The conversion from turf to native plantings creates habitat for wildlife, reduces stormwater run-off, and serves as a model for the community.

Before



After



The collective efforts of the Community of Practice to maintain and manage the urban forest have proven to be effective in advancing the goals and recommendations of the Tree Action Plan. When organizations and residents become invested in projects to improve the urban forest in their communities, the results are more successful and more likely to inspire future involvement than when the Fairfax County government works independently. These partnerships are essential in achieving our mission to conserve, manage, sustain, and expand our urban forest for the improvement of the environment for all.

## Chapter 7: Tree Commission Actions for the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

This reporting period covered a challenging year that included the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1. Meetings:** The Tree Commission met virtually 11 times (no meeting in August 2020) with a quorum of members present at all 11 meetings.
- 2. Awards made:**
  - a. Friends of Trees Awards
    - i. Friends of Accotink Creek
    - ii. Dragon Momcilovic
  - b. Tree Preservation Award  
Basheer & Edgemoore
  - c. Tree Planting Award  
Steve and Andrea Maaseide
- 3. Five Letters issued with Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors:  
(See Appendix 1 and Appendix 3-6 for letters)**
  - a. July 11, 2020: Support for the Natural Landscaping Plan Amendment
  - b. December 18, 2020: JET final report and Tree Commission concerns
  - c. April 15, 2020: Support for Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Amendments by the Virginia Department of Environment Quality
  - d. June 8, 2021: Support for Resource Protection Area Planting Changes
  - e. June 9, 2021: Feb 2019 Green Initiative Annual Report on item 5a of Board Matter 5a from February 5, 2019, and Recommendations
- 4. Community of Practice Meeting (COP):** the second meeting of the COP (the first was in March 2020) was held virtually on May 13, 2021. A new web page linked from the Tree Commission web site will be established to host a video of the meeting, notes and follow-up actions. An implementation matrix will be translated to a survey format to more easily collect, track, analyze and report on data from COP members.
- 5. Consolidated Annual Report:** work in earnest was begun to establish a structure for preparation of the Tree Commission's first consolidated annual report covering the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, that will be submitted in the fall of 2021. Subsequent annual reports will be submitted on or about the same time frame. Future reports requested annually of the Tree Commission will, where possible, be incorporated into this process.

## Chapter 8: Tree Commission Plans for the Coming Year:

1. The Tree Commission will continue monitoring proposed policy and ordinance changes in Fairfax County and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on ways to reduce impacts to trees and improve tree preservation. This may include recommendations for the BOS's legislative agenda.
2. Convene a third meeting of the COP to continue our engagement and technical assistance to members.
3. Establish and distribute an implementation matrix (see Appendix 2) through which the COP can more easily report on their work to the Tree Commission. The Tree Commission (with support from staff) could then more easily report to the Board of Supervisors on tree-related work in the community.
4. Update the Tree Commission's Charter and Operating Policies to reflect the current needs of the Board of Supervisors and Fairfax County.
5. Review and consider an update to the 2019 Tree Action Plan.
6. Review and make recommendations on upcoming implementation of the County-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP).
7. Begin preparations in March 2022 for the next edition of the consolidated annual report for submission to the Board of Supervisors on or about the fall of 2022. Future editions will include the annual reports required for (1) the 2019 Tree Action Plan, (2) the Fairfax Green Initiatives, and (3) the annual report on Tree Commission activities and plans for the year ahead, and (4) any other reporting needs requested by the Board of Supervisors on tree-related matters.

## Chapter 9: Recommendations

The Tree Commission looks forward to advising the Board of Supervisors on strategies and actions that will advance the goals of the Fairfax Green Initiatives, the Joint Environmental Task Force, the County-wide Climate and Energy Action Plan (CECAP) Report, the subsequent CECAP implementation plan, as well as the 2019 Tree Action Plan. We believe the Tree Commission is uniquely situated to help facilitate the preservation, protection and expansion of the tree canopy and other natural resources.

### I. Fairfax Green Initiatives Recommendations (See Appendix 1.)

- A. Approve permanent annual funding for a full-time position in the Urban Forest Management Division to support tree planting on public and private property.
- B. Approve a permanent funding source for tree planting on public and private property.
- C. Support Tree Commission and Urban Forestry Management Division (UFMD) efforts to gather reports of tree planting in Fairfax in support of Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) III goals by tasking all county agencies to report tree planting as directed by the Tree Commission and UFMD.
- D. Increase funding to the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District for additional staff to create and service Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) projects.
- E. Support our search for new messaging and approaches to persuade citizens who are reluctant to plant trees by tasking county agencies to meet with the Tree Commission to discuss how residents' resistance to tree planting might be overcome.



Clear, focused policies are needed to maintain and enhance the benefits provided by trees to the current and future residents of Fairfax County. *Photo, Cathy Ledec.*

### II. Joint Environmental Task Force (JET) (See Appendix 4.)

The Tree Commission continues to recommend that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) honor the JET's original mission which included a land use component that was excluded from the final report. That action is inconsistent with the 2017 Environmental Vision and the 2019 Tree Action Plan, both approved by the BOS.

### **III. Improving the Land Development Process by Prioritizing Trees (See Appendix 7.)**

- A. A Natural Resources and Tree Inventory with a Conceptual Site Plan should be approved prior to submittal of the Site Plan.
- B. Increase property boundary setbacks for infill development and re-zonings to provide adequate space for preservation of mature trees and planting of large shade trees.
- C. In areas with building height limitations, provide developers the option to build higher, thereby achieving more density, with a concurrent development condition that the building footprint must be reduced to allow for tree preservation or large shade tree planting.
- D. Raise the *fee in lieu* to reflect appraised value.
- E. How effective is the 10-year tree canopy requirement? Is it being met, managed, and retained?
- F. Identify high priority tree planting areas using an equity lens and vulnerability index.

### **IV. Other Policy Recommendations**

- A. Explicitly acknowledge tree planting and preservation as a climate change strategy in county policies.
- B. Projects listed here should be prioritized by ratings in the County's Vulnerability index with equity in mind:
  - 1. Stormwater Capital Improvement Program.
  - 2. The Fairfax County Park Authority's (FCPAs) "Helping our Land Heal" program.
  - 3. The FCPAs Land Acquisition program.
- C. Review and revise county nuisance and health ordinances that obstruct conversion of turf to native plants and ensure that such ordinances are consistent with the Natural Landscaping Policy Plan Amendment approved by the Board of Supervisors in June 2019.
- D. UFMD staff should collaborate with the FCPA in reviewing the work done by the FCPA on vegetation assessment of natural resources that fall under the responsibility of the FCPA. UFMD may gain valuable insight from this partnership in identifying measures of forest health and biodiversity to inform decision making.
- E. Fully engage with the state work group on tree canopy and preservation to ensure a favorable outcome that supports greater local authority over the tree canopy.
- F. Follow and support federal bills HR 2477 and HR 3522 to create greater support for tree planting and urban and community forestry.

- G. Provide additional support to the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District to expand capacity to provide technical assistance and oversight of conservation projects on private and common interest properties.

Fairfax County is poised to become an area leader on climate change concerns, and the Tree Commission looks forward to continuing to advise the Board of Supervisors on how our tree canopy is essential to mitigating those concerns, as well as being a critical part of the solutions the county will need to become resilient in the future.