

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

PARKS AND TRAILS

The Upper Rock Creek Planning Area includes more than 4000 acres of public forest. This parkland provides recreation and trail opportunities and preserves important natural and historic resources. A primary component of the park system is Rock Creek Regional Park in the southern portion of the Planning Area. Two lakes, recreational facilities and trails make the park one of the most popular recreation destinations in the County. The Agricultural History Farm Park in the northwest portion of the Planning Area provides visitors insights into the County's farming heritage. The balance of parkland includes recreational parks, local parks, and stream valley parks along Rock Creek and its North Branch.

The challenge is to provide recreational opportunities while protecting the parks' natural environment. Balancing these two objectives requires careful stewardship of the natural environment by assuring environmental issues are given careful consideration at all levels of park planning. The primary objective of this section of the Plan is to recommend expansion of the park system based on an evaluation of needs related to: recreation opportunities, resource protection, trail corridors, and settings for historic, cultural and archeological resources.

Recreation Opportunities

Recreation needs in Upper Rock Creek are currently served by one developed local park, four schools, and one developed regional park. These parks and schools provide a total of eight athletic fields available for community use, 10 tennis courts, six basketball courts and five playgrounds, as well as water recreation and picnic playground areas at the regional park. The Agricultural History Farm Park encompasses 439 acres of parkland and includes farm buildings, agricultural fields, and meeting rooms.

The 1998 Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan indicated that existing recreation facilities will meet needs of the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area through the year 2010. A new local park may be needed after that time, particularly as residential areas adjacent to Upper Rock Creek develop and the demand for park facilities increases.

Park Development

Local Parks: The following local parks are recommended for future park development:

- A new Upper Rock Creek Local Park, approximately 20 acres in size, is proposed at Muncaster Road and MD 108. The land is already publicly owned. This local park offers long-term development opportunities for ballfields and other recreation facilities to serve future needs of the Upper Rock Creek and Olney Planning Areas. Trails, picnic areas, and a playground should be provided.

Existing Recreation Facilities at Parks and Schools in Upper Rock Creek

Name of Park or School	Ballfields	Tennis Courts	Basketball Courts	Playgrounds
Bowie Mill Local Park	2 Soccer	2		1
Sequoyah ES	1 soccer, (softball overlay)		1	1
Candlewood ES	1 small softball field, soccer overlay		1	1
Redland MS	2 softball, 1 soccer	4	2	
Magruder HS	2 community use fields	4	2	
Rock Creek Regional Park	2 lakes, boat rental, visitors pavilion, fishing, nature center, picnic areas with shelters, 2 playgrounds, trails			
Agricultural Farm Park	Meeting rooms/office building, barn, farm buildings, fields			

- Winters Run Local Park is proposed for development of a soccer/lacrosse field and playground to supplement the fields and recreation facilities at the adjacent Redland Middle School.
- Bowie Mill Local Park and Sequoyah Elementary School should be expanded with a small dedication of adjacent land from the Casey Property at time of subdivision. This would permit the existing ballfields to be enlarged for community use.
- Muncaster Manor Local Park should be kept in agricultural lease, but reserved for future long term park use.

Regional and Recreational Parks: The following recommendations are suggested for future development of Regional and Recreational Parks in the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area:

- The majority of the 105-acre Muncaster Recreational Park, which is located adjacent to the Pope Farm Nursery, can not be developed for active recreation because it falls within environmental buffer areas. An approximately 11.8-acre area adjacent to MD 124 is suitable for active development and should be considered for lighted, high/impact facilities because it is adjacent to an industrial area and has access from an arterial. This facility could include indoor soccer or indoor tennis. A skateboard park and roller hockey rink could be considered as well. Picnic areas, a playground, trails and nature areas could be located in the wooded areas. An additional six acres of developable land is adjacent to the Pope Farm and may be considered for future local recreation use to serve the adjacent subdivision.

- The future development of Gude Recreational Park is questionable because it is a former landfill site that is still settling and producing methane gas. There is a contract for the removal of the gas that extends to approximately 2005. A schematic development plan completed for the park included five ballfields, an amphitheater, picnic playground areas and gravel parking. No paved facilities or structures were recommended because of the potential for damage from settling. At the conclusion of the methane recovery lease, an engineering assessment should be done and a revised plan prepared for the park. The plan should include a trail system with connections to the adjacent Upper Rock Creek Regional Park and Gude Drive.
- A plan has recently been approved for the Laytonia Recreational Park that includes four athletic fields, a basketball court, roller hockey court, playground and natural areas. The plan is consistent with recreation goals and needs in this part of the County.
- Rock Creek Regional Park, an already-developed regional park, encompasses 1778 acres in the southern portion of the Planning Area. It includes two lakes and many recreation facilities. The western portion of the Park is developed with active recreation areas including Lake Needwood boating area, picnic/playground areas, trails, archery, and a golf course. Conversely, the Lake Frank section of the park to the east is a predominantly undeveloped natural area with a nature center, nature trails, and shoreline fishing. A master plan developed for the Park in 1999 proposed additional trails and renovation of older park facilities.
- The Agricultural History Farm Park continues to provide an opportunity to interpret Montgomery County's rich agrarian heritage while demonstrating current trends in agricultural technology. The Park's programs, facilities, displays, and demonstrations combine the expertise of the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning, the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service, the Soil Conservation Service/Montgomery Soil Conservation District, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, as well as the Friends of the Agricultural History Farm Park. Important issues for future consideration include the need to prepare a limited amendment to the park master plan reflecting additions of a tank house, corn crib, saw-mill, and a Friends-funded antique equipment storage building to the site; the need to protect the park's boundaries and surrounding viewscape, especially north of the Activities Building on the site of the Hoover Farm; and the need to pursue funding for facility planning and construction of a maintenance yard. It has also been suggested that a small area east of and adjacent to Airpark Road might be suitable for propagating trees, thereby providing an opportunity for future expansion of operations associated with the Pope Farm Plant Nursery.

Open Space Under the RNC Zone

The RNC Zone requires that a minimum of 65 percent of the property be preserved as open space. There are a variety of mechanisms to ensure that the open space will be preserved in perpetuity. One option is to have the land dedicated as a new category of parkland that will remain open space in perpetuity. Under any circumstances, the land must not be considered for active recreational uses or other public purposes (e.g. a school).

Natural Resource Protection

Protection of the environmentally sensitive Rock Creek and North Branch Stream Valley Parks is essential. The Environmental Chapter of this Plan discusses important natural areas in the Parks as well as other portions of the Planning Area. It identifies properties that should be added to the park system to assure long-term protection and preservation of specific resources. Additional properties are recommended to be added to the park system to provide buffers for these resources and areas for forest or wetland restoration. These additions will enhance the stream valley park system and protect the stream valleys as development occurs in the Planning Area. These recommendations are keyed to the Parkland Recommendations map in the Implementation Chapter.

The Freeman property and the eastern portion of the Fraley property are identified as Class III sites in the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan. This Plan amends the Legacy Plan to add the proposed park acquisition areas on these properties as Class I Natural Resource sites. This Plan anticipates that these natural resource areas can be protected through park dedication during the development process.

Trail Corridors

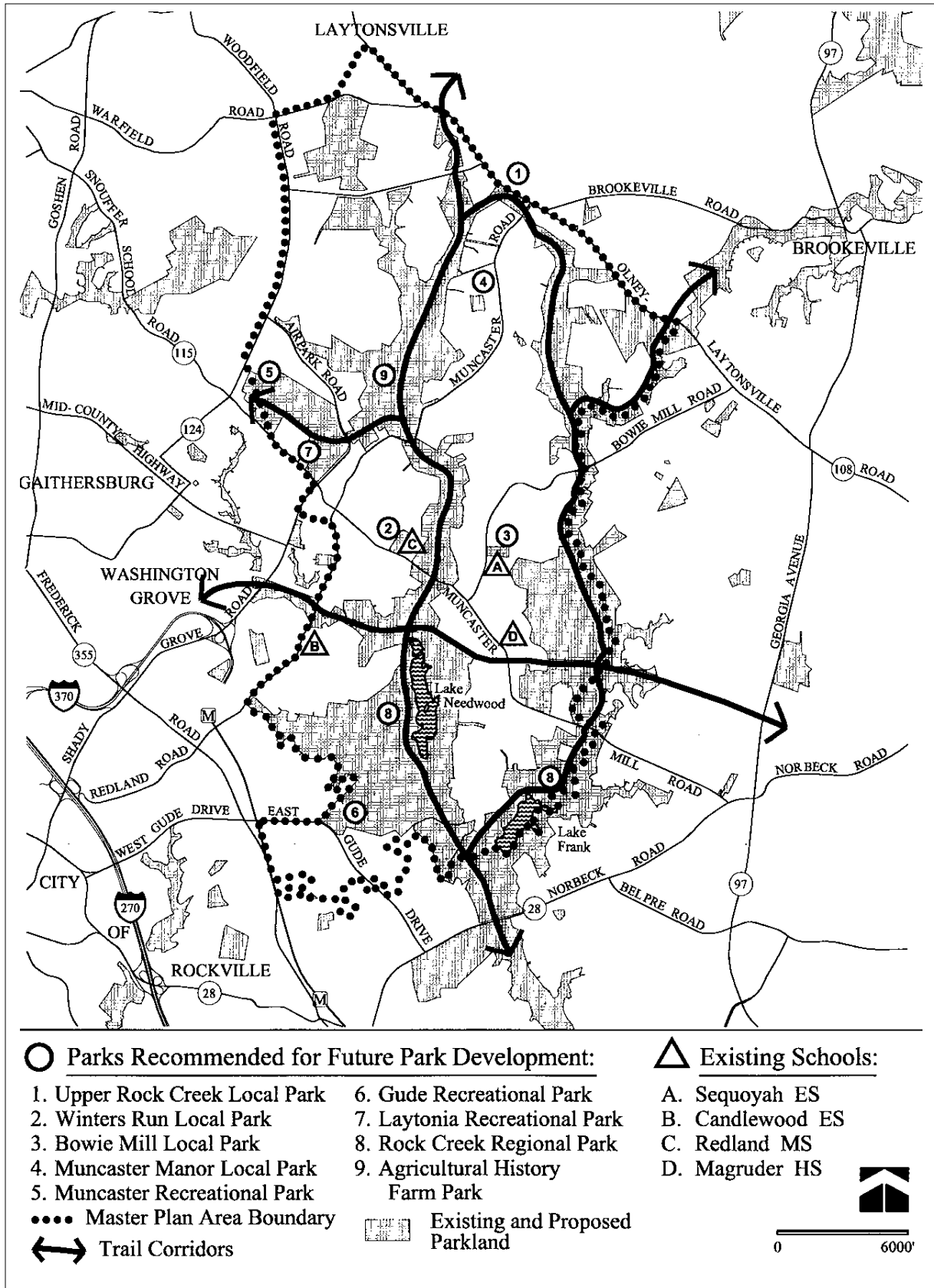
The 1998 Countywide Park Trails Plan and the Master Plan for Rock Creek Regional Park propose trail systems in the Planning Area. The Countywide Park Trails Plan shows a natural surface trail through the Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, linking Rock Creek Regional Park to the Agricultural History Farm Park, Muncaster Recreational Park, and ultimately extending north to the Patuxent River. The Countywide Park Trails Plan shows both a hard surface and a natural surface trail corridor in the North Branch of Rock Creek. To provide more opportunities to avoid environmentally sensitive areas when these trail proposals are studied in more detail at some time in the future, acquisition of additional parkland is recommended outside of the stream valley buffers whenever possible.

Trails are one of the county's most popular park recreation facilities. They accommodate a wide range of users, including walkers, hikers, cyclists and equestrians. In the Upper Rock Creek master plan area, equestrian trail easements on private land help provide connections from equestrian facilities to park trails and contribute to an extensive equestrian trail system. Opportunities to enhance and expand the network of equestrian trail easements will be explored during the regulatory review process.

The role of the ICC right-of-way in trail planning is also addressed in the Countywide Park Trails Plan, which recommends that a hard surface trail be provided in the vicinity of the right-of-way whether or not the highway is built. The Plan states:

If a highway is built on any portion of the ICC right-of-way, a bike/pedestrian path will also be provided. This path will provide east-west connectivity between the I-270 Corridor/Gaithersburg area and Rock Creek Regional Park, Martin Luther King Regional Park and Fairland Recreation Park. This Plan recommends a trail throughout the length of the ICC (with or without a highway). However, its exact location and design should remain flexible in order to minimize its environmental impact.

PARK DEVELOPMENT, EXISTING SCHOOLS AND TRAIL CORRIDORS



Trail Related Guidelines for Roadway Projects

At-grade road crossings are one of the most dangerous features of trails. Many such crossings exist in the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area. This Plan recommends that opportunities for providing safe trail crossings be included in any planned improvements for the following roadways: 1) Bowie Mill Road; 2) Muncaster Mill Road; 3) Muncaster Road; and 4) MD 108.

Additionally, the blinking light now located at the entrance to the Oaks Landfill should be retained to help provide safe crossing of MD 108 for trail users. As usage of this trail increases, a pedestrian activated crossing light should be considered.

Trail Recommendations include:

- **Needwood Road Area between Rock Creek Park and the ICC Right-of-Way:** The Countywide Park Trails Plan anticipates that the bike path proposed to be built in conjunction with the ICC will provide a much needed east-west connection among parks in the eastern part of the County, including Rock Creek Regional Park. As previously mentioned, this connection is so important that the Countywide Park Trail Plan proposes that the ICC right-of-way be considered for a hard surface trail whether or not the ICC is built. For this reason, providing a safe trail connection between Rock Creek Park and the ICC right-of-way is important. An area is designated for parkland south of Needwood Road to allow this connection.
- **Muncaster Mill Road and Emory Lane:** The Rock Creek Trail Corridor identified in the Countywide Park Trails Plan traverses both the Upper Rock Creek and the Olney Planning Areas. The Olney Master Plan will recommend a Class I bikeway along Emory Road near its intersection with Muncaster Mill Road. This bikeway should accommodate users of the North Branch trail corridors. If it cannot, land at the intersection may need to be acquired for a park trail in this area.

Trail Related Guidelines For Review of Development Proposals

When new development occurs in the Planning Area, a major concern should be how residents will access parkland without using their automobiles. This can be accomplished by providing sidewalks, bike paths or trails from new subdivisions to parks. This is especially important in the Rock Creek Planning Area because of the extensive amount of parkland in the area and the many opportunities to enjoy trails in both Rock Creek and the North Branch. Providing connections to these park systems will be a major concern in the review of private development.

Legacy Open Space

The Hendry property is identified as a Class III site in the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan. There is a potential trail link on a portion of the property between the Rock Creek Trail Corridor and developed or developing areas north of Bowie Mill Road. This Plan amends the Legacy Plan to remove the Hendry Property because more appropriate locations for this trail connection have been identified in this Plan.

Settings for Historic, Archeological and Cultural Features

Historic and archaeological sites provide important links to our County's heritage. Parkland acquisition is often desirable to preserve settings for historic, archaeological, and cultural features. These settings are a major part of the historic feature's origin and its sense of identity. They should be retained. Historic Sites are shown on the accompanying map of Parkland Recommendations.

Recommendations

- Research is currently underway on the operations of the Underground Railroad and other aids to escaping slaves in Montgomery County. Rock Creek was used as a route by escaping slaves and several sites in the D.C. section of Rock Creek Park have already been marked. Dorsey Spring (22/1), the headwaters of Rock Creek should be given top priority, and the condition of this resource should be assessed. Also, the marsh called *Blue Mash* is known to have been a hiding place for escaping slaves. Because of this historical connection between Rock Creek and Blue Mash, priority should be given to a trail connecting them. Between the two, on MD 108, was an African American village called Claysville (22/3), which is no longer there, but which should be noted as a possible link. Blue Mash should then be connected with Rachel Carson Park and the Northwest Branch Trail. This connection would create a trail loop on the Underground Railroad in the area, and a link to the Patuxent River, the gateway to Pennsylvania and freedom for escaping slaves.
- The Agricultural History Farm Park is an important historic resource. Views from trails and main public areas of the park should be consistent with the agricultural character of the park. The Bussard Farm House and Barn (22/7) interpretive area is planned to be a Living History Museum of a 1910 farmstead. These 40 acres are especially sensitive and the viewscapes from the house and barn should be assigned special importance in order to maintain the historical cultural landscape for educational purposes.
- Another park planning concern is to protect the historic location of the Bowie Mill, located adjacent to present-day Bowie Mill Road on the west side of the North Branch of Rock Creek. The M-NCPPC has already acquired both the head race and tail race leading to and from the actual mill site. Acquisition of the footprint of the mill foundation would complete the preservation of this historic cultural resource, which has given its name both to the road and local neighborhoods and would enhance interpretative opportunities.
- The Muncaster Mill site and the Horner's Mill site, already in parkland, should also be protected and interpreted.
- Signage - Historical interpretive signage should be placed at all historic sites along trails. These include: Bussard Farmstead, Newmantown site, Dorsey Spring (headwaters of Rock Creek), Muncaster Mill site, Horner's Mill site, Bowie Mill site, and others relating to the Underground Railroad.

GREENWAYS

Greenways are linear open spaces set aside for recreation and conservation uses. Greenways link people, communities, and the natural environment. The greenway concept is a unifying approach that uses existing regulatory and voluntary programs to create a county-wide network of green spaces. The network will provide for protection of stream valley habitats and links for human and animal movement throughout the County. The greenway concept will be implemented through a variety of techniques that include regulation and acquisition, such as the creation of private conservation easements or the purchase or dedication of land for parks. Greenways can be on public or on private lands. Private land in greenways may be protected through conservation easements to provide open space and wildlife habitat, and may afford public access in cases where the property owner has given special permission. Greenways on public land may provide differing levels of public access, depending on the sensitivity of natural resources and physical constraints imposed by steep slopes, wet soils or floodplains.

Recommendation

- Designate the Mainstem and North Branch Rock Creek Greenways for purposes of state and federal funding for park acquisition or trail construction.

SCHOOLS

Public schools are an integral part of the fabric of any community. Montgomery County's public schools are divided into 21 clusters that are based on one or more high schools. Cluster boundaries are generally drawn to serve surrounding residential communities and maintain socio-economic balance among the populations of the elementary, middle, and high schools. Students in Upper Rock Creek attend schools in three clusters: Magruder, Sherwood, and Gaithersburg.

Most of the Master Plan area lies within the Magruder Cluster. Two of the Cluster's elementary schools, one of its middle schools and the high school are within the Master Plan area's boundaries. Students in the northernmost portion of the area attend schools in the Gaithersburg Cluster, while students in the northeastern part of the area, between North Branch and Bowie Mill Road, attend schools in the Sherwood Cluster.

One new elementary school, Sequoyah on Bowie Mill Road, has been constructed since approval and adoption of the 1985 Master Plan. Montgomery County Public Schools owns two sites in the Planning Area: a 28-acre parcel near the intersection of Warfield and Woodfield Roads in the northern part of the Planning Area and a newly-acquired site on Wickham Road north of the Norbeck Grove community. There are no immediate plans for construction on either site. The need for new schools is determined by the capacity of existing schools and projected increases in enrollment. This Plan recommends that the Wickham Road property, Sherwood Elementary School #6, be developed with housing if MCPS does not build a school.

The County's Annual Growth Policy sets guidelines for determining local schools' ability to accommodate ongoing development. The County Council "evaluates available capacity in each high school cluster and compare[s] enrollment projected by Montgomery County Schools for

each fiscal year with projected school capacity five years out. If insufficient capacity is available, the Council determines whether an adjacent cluster or clusters has sufficient capacity to cover the projected deficit in school capacity.”

The Board of Education programs capital funds for modernizations, expansions, and new construction. It can also modify service areas to accommodate policy goals or balance enrollment with facility space. This Plan supports the Board’s Capital Improvement Program.

LIBRARIES

Upper Rock Creek’s relatively small population forces residents to travel to nearby Olney or Gaithersburg for some services. The area is served by the Olney Library, on MD 108 outside the town center, and the Gaithersburg Library on Montgomery Village Avenue. There are also libraries in Aspen Hill and Rockville. Montgomery County Public Libraries has recognized that an additional library will eventually be needed to serve this part of the central County. Facility planning for Laytonia Recreational Park, at Airpark and Muncaster Mill Roads, includes space for a library of up to 40,000 square feet to serve this area.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety services are provided to residents by the Montgomery County Police and by volunteer fire and rescue companies. Police Officers from the First District in Rockville, the Fourth District in Wheaton and the Sixth District in Gaithersburg/Montgomery Village serve the Planning Area.

The Montgomery County Division of Fire and Rescue Services, in conjunction with the volunteer fire departments provides fire and rescue services. The Upper Rock Creek master plan area is served primarily by four fire stations: Station 17 on Route 108 in Laytonsville, Station 28 on Muncaster Mill Road in the Redland section of Gaithersburg, Station 40 on Georgia Avenue in Olney, and Station 3 on Hungerford Drive in Rockville. These four stations provide fire suppression, rescue and emergency medical services. Fire-rescue units from other nearby stations respond into this area, as well, when needed.

Because of their small size and overall condition, Laytonsville Station 17, Gaithersburg-Washington Grove Station 28, and Rockville Station 3 may be renovated on their present sites or relocated to nearby sites within the next 10-15 years. Sandy Spring Station 40 is expected to remain at its present site and not require any major renovation over the next 10-15 years. No additional fire-rescue stations are anticipated within the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan Area within the next 10-15 years, however, the redeployment of certain fire-rescue units may occur based upon changing needs of the area.

To enhance fire suppression capabilities in areas that lack fire hydrants, the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) urges builders and property owners to voluntarily install underground water tanks for use by the MCFRS as part of housing developments. The size of these underground water tanks should be based on the fire fighting water flow requirements of the property to be protected. The tanks should hold 20,000 gallons or more and should meet requirements of National Fire Protection Association, including appropriate connections for hook-up to MCFRS pumpers and a roadside sign or pavement marking identifying the tank’s

location to fire fighters. Properties that include ponds can be made readily accessible to fire fighters by installing “dry hydrants” and providing improved access to them, such as paved or gravel roadways with turnaround areas for MCFRS vehicles.

This recommendation should not preclude builders and property owners in rural areas from voluntarily installing fire sprinkler systems within single-family homes and small businesses as the primary means of structural fire protection.