I. PURPOSE

In order to provide for growth while protecting Montgomery County's natural resources, all proposals for development in Montgomery County will be reviewed in terms of environmental impact and protection before being approved by the Planning Board. These guidelines present environmental management strategies and criteria for staff use in reviewing the elements of development proposals and in formulating recommendations to the Planning Board. The guidelines provide an indication of what conditions would be acceptable for project approval under most circumstances. It is expected that through the identification of existing natural resources and the application of these guidelines, it will be possible to obtain a balance between accommodating the level of development permitted through zoning and protecting the County's existing natural resources.

The intent of these guidelines is to describe the process of preparing a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) for development sites and to describe techniques to protect natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas being adversely affected by construction activities and development. These guidelines are intended to ensure that adequate consideration is given to the following environmental management objectives throughout the development process:

- Maintenance of biologically viable and diverse streams and wetlands
- Protection and restoration of stream water quality
- Reduction in flood potential
- Protection of water supply reservoirs against sedimentation and eutrophication
- Conservation of forest and trees
- Protection of steep slopes
- Preservation/protection of wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, and exemplary communities, including rare, threatened, and endangered species
- Protection against development hazards on areas prone to flooding, soil instability, etc.
- Provision of visual amenities and areas for recreation and outdoor education activities
- Implementation of state and county riparian buffer programs

In addition, the *Montgomery County General Plan* and local area master plans articulate County-wide and planning area-wide goals, objectives, principles, and policies to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development, as required in the Annotated Code of Maryland Article 66B (Zoning and Planning), 3.05-01 (viii). These guidelines provide the detailed criteria and methods for regulatory review of development in sensitive areas. Sensitive areas include the following:

- Streams and their buffers
- 100-yr floodplains

- Habitats of threatened and endangered species
- Steep slopes

The guidelines are consistent with existing regulations controlling wetlands, dam breach/danger reach, floodplain, and forest conservation administered at the federal, state, and local level. Forest conservation requirements are in accordance with State and County forest conservation laws and are dealt with in detail in the *Trees: Approved Technical Manual* (M-NCPPC, 1992). In cases dealing with such issues as dam breach/danger reach analysis, stormwater management, and sediment and erosion control, where M-NCPPC is not the lead agency, the information needed for staff use in making recommendations to the Planning Board will be required and reviewed in coordination with the lead agency. In cases where lead agencies' responsibilities overlap in the use of an area on a site, this document gives direction and guidelines as to the criteria to resolving the site design conflict.

Unlike some jurisdictions, zoning regulations do not delete the environmentally sensitive lands from density calculations; however, the amount of constrained area should be considered during the master plan and zoning process to assure that intended densities and housing types can be achieved on the unconstrained areas.

Flexibility shall be shown in the application of these guidelines on a site by site basis to best achieve both environmental and other planning objectives for the site. The Planning Board at their discretion may approve, waive, or amend staff recommendations.