

**Ten Mile Creek Amendment
Appendix 7**

Department of Parks Analysis and Recommendations



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 23, 2013

To: Valdis Lazdins, Chief, Area 1
Mary Dolan, Chief, Functional Planning & Policy

Via: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks
Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Administration *MR*
John Nissel, Deputy Director of Operations
John Hench, Chief, Park Planning & Stewardship *JHench*

From: Brenda Sandberg, Legacy Open Space Program Manager *BBS*
Brooke Farquhar, Master Planner/Supervisor Park and Trail Planning *Brooke Farquhar*
Jim McMahon, Park Manager, Northern Parks

RE: Park, Trail and Legacy Open Space Recommendations: Clarksburg Limited Master Plan for the Ten Mile Creek Watershed

Recommendations

The Department of Parks proposes the following recommendations for inclusion in the Clarksburg Limited Master Plan for the Ten Mile Creek Watershed:

Legacy Open Space

- Designate the high quality, critical forest and open habitats that protect the quality of the Ten Mile Creek Headwaters as a Legacy Open Space Natural Resource site (Class II) (Attachment 1).
- Protect the designated Natural Resource on an individual property basis using a variety of tools including easements, dedication through the development review process, and fee simple acquisition.

Park and Trail Recommendations

- Provide a countywide natural surface trail, designed to M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks standards, in the Ten Mile Creek area linking Little Bennett Regional Park and Black Hill Regional Park as per the Countywide Park Trails Plan and the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan.
- Provide five trailheads, designed to M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks standards, for access to the Ten Mile Creek natural surface trail and nearby natural areas for park users and operations staff.
- Provide a new natural resource-based Neighborhood Park of at least ten acres for close-to-home recreation for the Ten Mile Creek area, designed to M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks standards.

Legacy Open Space Analysis

Existing Legacy Open Space Policy and Site Analysis

The *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* (M-NCPPC, 2001) is designed to protect the best of the best open space resources across the County with a variety of protection tools. The designation of a Legacy Open Space Natural Resource site, as we recommend for the Ten Mile Creek Headwaters, creates a policy rationale for protecting the resource of interest using easement, preservation through development review, and fee simple acquisition into conservation parkland. For this recommended Natural Resource site in the headwaters of the Ten Mile Creek Watershed, Parks recommends using a combination of tools on the varying properties with the Natural Resource designation to protect the forest and watershed.

Background

- Ten Mile Creek watershed was included in Appendix D of the County Council-approved and adopted *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* (M-NCPPC, 2001) as a potential Natural Resource site that needs further evaluation (a Class III site).
- The LOS Master Plan already notes that the area “meets [the] criteria” to be a Natural Resource site, but needs evaluation to determine specific areas to include in the LOS designation.
- The Ten Mile Creek watershed includes over 600 acres of contiguous forest, predominantly a dry and mesic forest on acidic bedrock, comprising mature mixed oak hickory forest predating the 1950s. The geographic positioning of this large forest complex in the headwaters of Ten Mile Creek is an essential reason why documented water quality within Ten Mile Creek is Good to Excellent (*Montgomery County Countywide Stream Protection Strategy*, MCDEP, 2010).
- The large headwater forest area includes large areas of interior forest and has a documented high probability for Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS). Further study is needed to evaluate whether the site may harbor Rare, Threatened or Endangered and Watch-listed plant and animal species (RTES).
- The Ten Mile Creek headwaters forest is one of the few remaining large high quality forest areas not currently afforded protection through easement or public ownership as a Stream Valley or Conservation Park in Montgomery County.

Legacy Criteria Analysis

The Legacy criteria from the Functional Master Plan (p. 17) are listed below. The Ten Mile Creek Headwaters meets six of the eight overall criteria (identified with underlining below), making it a strong candidate for designation under the program.

1. The Resource has particular countywide, regional, or national significance in terms of (a) known or potential habitats for rare, threatened, or endangered species; (b) a “best example” of terrestrial or aquatic community; (c) unique or unusual ecological communities; (d) large, diverse areas with a variety of habitats; or (e) exceptional views, architectural character, or historic association.
2. The Resource is critical to the successful implementation of public policy such as the protection of the Agricultural Reserve and public water supply.

3. The Resource is part of a “critical mass” of like resources that perform an important environmental or heritage function.
4. The Resource makes a significant contribution to one or more heritage themes.
5. The Resource provides human or ecological connectivity between significant park, natural or historic areas and/or corridors.
6. The Resource helps to buffer and thereby protect other significant resources.
7. The Resource represents an opportunity for broadening interpretation and public understanding of natural and heritage resources.
8. The Resource provides a significant opportunity (a) to increase access to public open space in communities with high population densities, (b) to protect scarce open space in an urbanized community, (c) to improve the character of a green boulevard of countywide or regional significance, or (d) to provide for a new regional park facility.

Analysis of the Ten Mile Creek Headwaters by the specific LOS Natural Resource criteria concludes that:

- The Ten Mile Creek Headwaters is of countywide significance due to:
 - Having high potential to include habitats for rare, threatened, or endangered species in the large areas of undisturbed, high quality forest;
 - Being a “best example” of an aquatic community as documented in the Countywide Stream Protection Strategy and other County research;
 - Including large, diverse areas with a variety of habitats to support biodiversity on land and in the aquatic habitat
- The Ten Mile Creek Headwaters is critical to the successful implementation of public policy, specifically the protection of public water supply in Little Seneca Lake downstream from the headwaters.
- The Ten Mile Creek Headwaters is part of a “critical mass” of like resources across several watersheds that perform an important environmental function – the protection of the high quality aquatic resources in the Ten Mile Creek watershed that drains to a water supply reservoir, Little Seneca Lake.
- The Ten Mile Creek Headwaters provides ecological connectivity between significant natural areas in Bucklodge Forest Conservation Park, Little Bennett Regional Park and Black Hill Regional Park.
- The Ten Mile Creek Headwaters resource helps to buffer and thereby protect other significant resources in the Ten Mile Creek watershed.

In summary, the Ten Mile Creek Headwaters site is a large area of contiguous, high quality forest that protects a significant, high quality watershed, factors that combine to make this an important Natural Resource to the County and one that should clearly be added to the Legacy Open Space program for protection.

Legacy Open Space Recommendations

- *Designate the high quality, critical forest and open habitats that protect the quality of the Ten Mile Creek Headwaters as a Legacy Open Space Natural Resource site (Class II) (Attachment 1).*
 - Staff proposes a Natural Resource designation area that covers approximately 1230 acres within the Limited Master Plan boundary. For comparison, the proposed parkland combined with “private conservation areas” designated for protection in the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan cover approximately 1340 acres
 - Attachment 1 (*1994 Clarksburg MP Conservation Areas and Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource*) illustrates the proposed Ten Mile Creek Headwaters Natural Resource with an overlay of the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan Conservation Areas.
 - The indicated Conservation Areas (black cross hatch) include both the “Proposed Parkland” and “Private Conservation Areas” from the 1994 Plan since Parks has decided to exercise the option in the 1994 Plan to require conveyance of all conservation areas as parkland during development (as submitted in comments on the pending pre-application).
 - Some developable areas in the 1994 Plan are being recommended for conservation in this LOS proposal, but some of the 1994 Conservation Areas are being excluded from the Legacy proposal to allow for development. The 1994 Conservation Areas that are being excluded from the proposed Natural Resource are based on detailed environmental analysis conducted by the Planning Department that has identified a proposed development envelope close to Clarksburg Road.
 - Attachment 2 (*Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource, Parks and Trails*) indicates the Natural Resource designation area as the proposed future Ten Mile Creek Conservation Park in relation to the proposed natural surface trail corridor, future neighborhood park (see Park and Trail recommendations below), and the Planning Department’s proposed development envelope.
- *Protect the designated Natural Resource on an individual property basis using a variety of tools including easements, dedication through the development review process, and fee simple acquisition. Individual property implementation recommendations are as follows:*
 - **Mattlyn Enterprises, LLC** – Pursue resource protection through acquisition.
 - **Montgomery County parcels** – For County-owned parcels outside the proposed development boundary and not already part of the park system, coordinate with County to transfer key resource areas to Park management.
 - **Clarkwood LC** – Pursue resource protection through acquisition.
 - **Shiloh Farm Investments/John King Jr. properties (Pulte Homes)** –
 - Seek conveyance of identified Natural Resource site outside of the proposed development boundary as the core of the Ten Mile Creek Conservation Park.
 - During development design, ensure that proposed homes fronting mature forest within the LOS Natural Resource site are set back from the forest edge a minimum of 150 feet to minimize edge impact and to reduce the potential for hazardous trees impacts associated

with improved property, according to American Society of Arboriculture recommended setbacks. Adequate access for park maintenance throughout the developed area and along the parkland border should be accommodated as part of this setback.

- Within the Pulte-controlled properties, the proposed LOS Natural Resource covers 352 acres, about 42 acres more than the area shown as Conservation Areas in the 1994 Clarksburg Plan (310 acres).
- **Hancock property** – Seek acquisition of this inholding within the Shiloh Farm Investments portion of the Natural Resource site.
- **Maryland Environmental Trust parcels** – Seek acquisition of these parcels in ownership of MET.
- **Betty Casey Trust** – Protect natural resources and preserve active agriculture at time of subdivision or sale through a combination of easement, reforestation of stream valleys, and/or park acquisition.
- **Rable property** – Pursue resource protection through acquisition.
- **Mease and Beck properties** – Pursue partial acquisition to preserve key resources along two main branches of Ten Mile Creek while preserving open agricultural land.
- **All other properties** – Seek to protect resources on these smaller properties using full variety of tools, such as easements, partial acquisition, or full acquisition, as opportunities arise over time.

Park and Trail Analysis

Policy Background

Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area, adopted June 1994

The 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area (“1994 Plan”) recommended several parks, trails and greenways for the entire area, with a key “goal to link all parkland via a greenway network” (p.159). The proposed park system was envisioned to provide a range of park and recreation services, from countywide to community use facilities. Over several hundred acres of greenways wide enough to “allow development of a trail system”, further development of the two regional parks (Little Bennett and Black Hill), two recreational parks (Ovid Hazen Wells and Damascus), a special park (Clarksburg Road, renamed Linthicum Recreational Park), and five local parks were recommended. In addition to the above parks, the 1994 Plan advocated for neighborhood recreation areas, stating that “each new residential development in a neighborhood should provide adequate private open space and recreational facilities for its residents to enjoy non-structured recreation” (p. 162).

Many of the new and future parks are located on the east side of I-270 in areas of the greatest density of development. The Master Plan areas on the west side of I-270 include the Ten Mile Creek Area and the Cabin Branch Neighborhood. In the Cabin Branch area, the 1994 Plan proposed the local park now named Cabin Branch and a special park now named Linthicum Recreational Park. In the Ten Mile Creek area, the 1994 Plan proposed an interconnected greenway with a major natural surface trail forming the link between the two regional parks in the area, Little Bennett and Black Hill. No other public parks were proposed in the 1994 Plan for the Ten Mile Creek area since the Planning Board’s Draft recommended only 100 dwelling units on large lots

and thus envisioned no need for more close-to-home park facilities. When the density was increased to 900 dwelling units by Council, there was insufficient time to re-examine park needs in the area.

Issues and Opportunities

To determine issues, opportunities, and preliminary recommendations the Department of Parks re-examined the 1994 Plan recommendations, as well as park and trail planning guidance for natural-resource based recreation and facility-based recreation needs, including the 1998 *Countywide Park Trails Plan*, the 2010 *Vision 2030 Strategic Plan*, the 2012 *Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan*, and the 2005 *PROS Plan*.

Clarksburg Master Plan

The 1994 Plan generally laid out a well-distributed system of park platforms and trails to serve densities and land uses in Clarksburg. Due to its proximity to local parks, recreational parks, and regional parks, the Ten Mile Creek area is well served nearby by drive-to facilities such as athletic fields, picnic areas, courts and playgrounds. Every residence in the Ten Mile Creek Area will be within a mile of future adult rectangular fields, playgrounds, and basketball courts, as well as hard surface and natural surface trails at Clarksburg Local Park, Linthicum Recreational Park, and Clarksburg Elementary School.

The addition of significant potential density in Ten Mile Creek area at the time of Council approval raises concern as to whether sufficient neighborhood park and recreation amenities were recommended in 1994. If the Limited Master Plan under review now continues to recommend these densities, an important issue will be how to achieve an adequate supply of close-to-home park facilities typically found in a neighborhood park.

Natural Resource-based Recreation: Natural Areas and Trails

Recommendations for the Ten Mile Creek Area in the 1994 Plan focused on the importance of conservation and stewardship in the Ten Mile Creek Area. The character of the land presents both an issue and an opportunity. With its steep wooded stream valleys and high knolls and ridges, some of them with views into the forest, the area lends itself to natural resource-based recreation, accessed by trails within the proposed park system.

Countywide Park Trails Plan

The 1998 *Countywide Park Trails Plan (CWPTP)* (updated in 2008) recommended a major regional natural surface trail along the east side of the Ten Mile Creek to connect Black Hill Regional Park with Little Bennett Regional Park. The Preliminary Service Delivery Recommendations of the *CWPTP Amendment* reconfirmed this segment of trail as a critical route in the County's regional trail system, and recognized its importance as part of the MoCo Epic route. To support the trail and public and maintenance access to it, trailheads, road crossings, bridges, and maintenance access will need to be appropriately sited.

Vision 2030 and 2012 Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan

In the *Vision 2030* survey, Natural Areas and Trails used to access them were rated as the top two most important park and recreation components. The 2012 *PROS Plan* showcases how Natural Areas are important not only for conservation of ecosystems, but for a form of recreation referred to as natural resource-based recreation. Natural resource-based recreation is defined in *PROS* as:

...any leisure activity conducted outdoors that is dependent on a particular element or combination of elements in the natural environment. These elements cannot be easily duplicated by human effort. In contrast, facility-based recreation (any leisure activity dependent on a built facility) can generally be provided anywhere, assuming the availability of space and funds for development. Natural resource-based

recreation includes a vast range of pursuits including bicycling, hiking, running, and horseback riding on trails, bird watching, nature photography, wildlife viewing, and fishing....

The 2012 *PROS Plan* explains the importance of Natural Areas and Trails to access them to existing and future populations:

Quality of life in Montgomery County is significantly enhanced when adults have easy access to natural areas where they can de-stress and unplug from fast-paced lives. As our population grows older, the importance of access to natural areas increases. In addition, natural resource-based recreation forms the backbone of the meaningful experiences children and youth have in nature outside of school....

Finally, the 2012 *PROS Plan* describes the type of parkland needed to support natural resource-based recreation:

Natural resource-based recreation requires land and resource preservation far beyond the actual space for trails, wildlife viewing and other activities. Water quality capable of sustaining a diversity of fish and amphibian species, forests large enough to harbor forest interior dwelling birds, geological and soil conditions diverse enough to provide habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species - all are dependent on large tracts of land. The best resources will attract the greater numbers of visitors and the quality of a natural recreational experience is directly related to the quality of the environment within which the activity is taking place. High quality natural environments are characterized by a diversity of animals and plants, an absence of invasive plants, a general absence of manmade features and often include varied topography and hydrologic features, and the necessary quiet and solitude to enjoy nature. Large natural areas are needed to insure ecological function and sustainability, be it preserving watersheds or limiting fragmentation and edge effects to forested areas. (2012 PROS Plan, pp. 44-46)

Based on the importance of preserving natural areas and creating trails for access to resource-based recreation, the Ten-Mile Creek area offers a valuable opportunity to serve not only the Clarksburg population, but residents countywide.

Facility-Based Recreation

The 2012 *PROS Plan* estimates future needs for facilities in the Clarksburg Planning Area to the year 2022 as 3 playgrounds, 5 tennis courts, and 3 basketball courts. *PROS* demonstrates that needs will be met at a minimum at the following parks and schools: Cabin Branch Local Park, Piedmont Woods Neighborhood Park, Clarksburg Village South Local Park, and Damascus/Clarksburg Middle School #2.

The 2005 *LPPRP/PROS Plan* estimated a need for nineteen adult-sized rectangular fields throughout the entire I-270 Corridor area. According to *PROS*, by the year 2021, thirteen of these will have been constructed. The balance of the future need will be constructed beyond the Year 2022. In addition, immediately north of the area, the portion of Little Bennett Regional Park located between MD 355 and I-270 could accommodate at least five more rectangular fields in the future.

Staff agrees with the 1994 Plan that in areas of residential density, close-to-home recreational facilities are needed. In the Ten Mile Creek area, it makes sense to provide those types of facilities that will provide access to and will enhance the natural resource areas. Facilities with minimal impervious surfaces such as open grassy areas for a variety of activities (described in *PROS* as Community Open Space), natural play areas, and community gathering areas were highly rated by the *Vision 2030* survey. *PROS* identified several new facility types that are needed in neighborhoods such as dog parks, community open space and community gardens.

Park and Trail Recommendations

- *Provide a countywide natural surface trail, designed to M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks standards, in the Ten Mile Creek area linking Little Bennett Regional Park and Black Hill Regional Park as per the Countywide Park Trails Plan and the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan.*
 - The countywide trail segment to link Little Bennett Regional Park with Black Hill Regional Park should be located within the proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource and existing conservation parkland, per the CWPTP and the 1994 Plan.
 - Trails should be built using sustainable standards. Sufficient access to build and maintain the trails and the natural areas around them may require areas outside the environmental buffers in upland areas. Trails should be built using sustainable standards, which could include environmentally sensitive crossings such as bridges or boardwalks. Trails should include signage that meets Department standards.
 - Trail connections to Little Bennett and Black Hill Regional Parks will require stream and road crossings in the safest manner possible.
- *Provide five trailheads, designed to M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks standards, for access to the Ten Mile Creek natural surface trail and nearby natural areas for park users and operations staff.*
 - Five trailheads should be strategically located to access the Ten Mile Creek Trail and the natural resource areas. These trailheads should provide safe and logical public access as well as access for maintenance and policing, and should be built to Parks standards. Trailheads should include:
 - Gravel parking lot with 6-8 parking spaces
 - Kiosks with wayfinding and interpretive signage
- *Provide a new natural resource-based Neighborhood Park of at least ten acres for close-to-home recreation for the Ten Mile Creek area, designed to M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks standards.*
 - A natural resource-based Neighborhood Park of at least ten acres, located outside of environmentally sensitive areas, is recommended as a platform for walkable, close-to-home facilities and to serve as a trailhead for the Ten Mile Creek natural surface trail. The park should have a natural resource theme and should be located adjacent to conservation parkland.
 - The proposed Preliminary Program of Requirements for the Neighborhood Park is as follows:
 - Access to the Conservation Park to the west for trail users and operations, maintenance and police functions from the development
 - Trailhead with small gravel parking area (6-8 spaces), with access through the development
 - Picnic Area
 - Natural Play Area
 - Community Garden
 - Community Open Space large enough for community festivals and pickup sports, at least 15,000 square feet
 - Adequate space to provide for Environmental Site Design, Stormwater Management, Forest Conservation, and other regulatory requirements

Attachments:

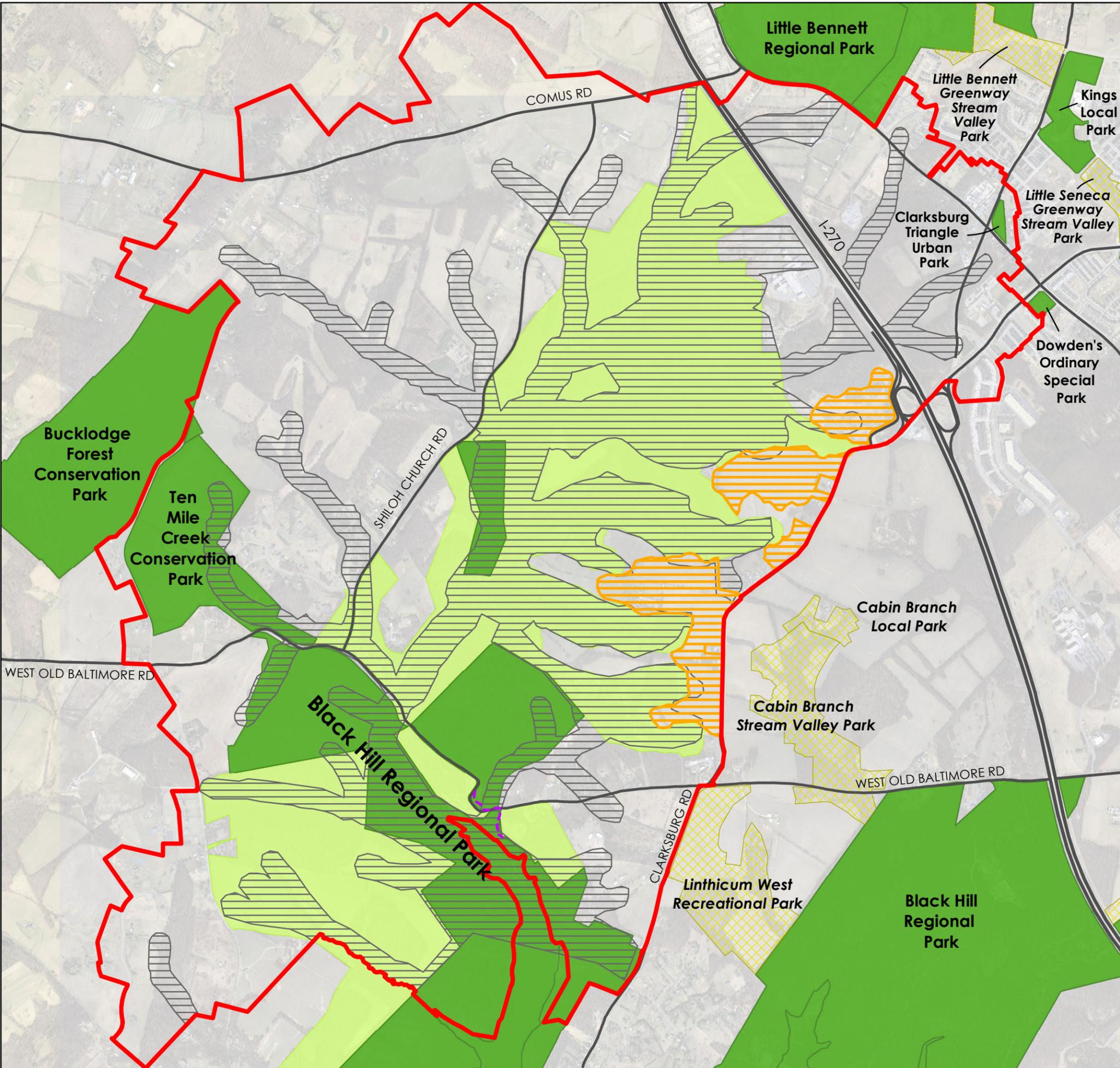
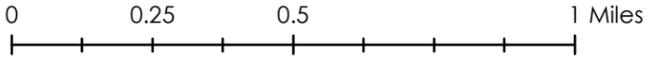
- 1) Clarksburg Master Plan (1994) Conservation Areas and Current Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource, Ten Mile Creek Area
- 2) Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource and Parks and Trails, Ten Mile Creek Area

CC: Mike Horrigan
Jim Humerick
Wendy Hanley
Susanne Paul
Geoffrey Mason
Fred Boyd

Attachment 1:

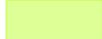
Clarksburg Master Plan (1994) Conservation Areas and Current Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource, Ten Mile Creek Area

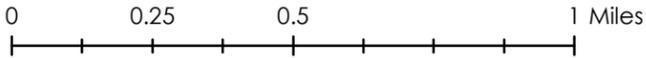
-  Clarksburg Master Plan (1994) Conservation Areas
-  Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource
-  Clarksburg Ten Mile Creek Limited Amendment
-  M-NCPPC Parks proposed by 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan
-  Planning Department Proposed Development Areas
-  Existing M-NCPPC Parkland



Attachment 2:

Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource and Parks and Trails, Ten Mile Creek Area

-  Proposed Legacy Open Space Natural Resource
-  Proposed Natural Surface Trail
-  Proposed Trailhead
-  Proposed M-NCPPC Neighborhood Park
-  Elementary School proposed by 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan
-  M-NCPPC Parks proposed by 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan
-  Planning Department Proposed Development Areas
-  Clarksburg Ten Mile Creek Limited Amendment
-  Existing Natural Surface Trail
-  Existing M-NCPPC Parkland



May 2013

