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CONSERVANCY
for Charles County, Inc.



OTHER *Carol DeSoto*
September 22, 2021

Hearing before the Board of County Commissioners

Re: Comprehensive Plan Amendment- Maryland Airport

I am Hal Delaplane of La Plata and I am speaking on behalf of the Conservancy for Charles County. We are a charitable non-profit land trust dedicated to preserving the rural character and natural assets of the county for the benefit of the general public.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began its comments on the county's proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan by saying:

"[DNR] has been in full support of the Watershed Conservation District (WCD), recognizing it as an innovative use of planning overlays to conserve high-quality habitat and keep its watershed from passing a nearby ecological tipping point associated with significant losses of natural resources and their economic value to the County. **We believe these actions were implemented partly in response to recommendations to conserve the ecological integrity described in "The Case for Protection of the Watershed Resources of Mattawoman Creek"** [emphasis added].

DNR had it right. That was precisely why the County implemented the WCD with overwhelming public support. The main motivation in assigning the WCD was to limit increased impervious cover in the watershed to 8 percent.

The Conservancy has two primary concerns with this proposal--the amount of acreage at risk of forest fragmentation and the amount of acreage at risk of impervious cover as great or greater than 60 percent. Much of the 558 acres around the airport proposed to be removed from WCD protection is identified by DNR as a Targeted Ecological Area, defined as "lands and watersheds of high ecological value that have been identified as conservation priorities." The area is mostly forested with much of it on steep stream valley slopes of Mattawoman Creek.

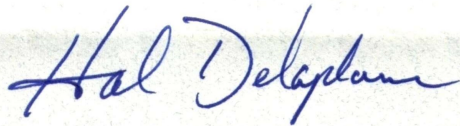
In The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Landscapes mapping website,

<https://tnc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=73c99463525a4d74957463cbe110f09c>

which is based on its 2016 report, "Resilient and Connected Landscapes for Terrestrial Conservation", the forest surrounding the airport is identified as a resilient area, meaning it is buffered from climate change in ways that create climate options for species. This acreage connects the Nanjemoy forest hub, a larger resilient area, with the forested corridor of Mattawoman Creek, thus providing a way for species populations to move over time in

The inevitable increase in impervious surface would worsen erosion and harm water quality. The state recommended the county consider the potential impacts on the watershed from the likely range of impervious surface that would result. Have you? Mitigation best management practices rarely are effective enough to keep watersheds functioning naturally.

In conclusion, the history of this proposal suggests the watershed could be put at risk for non-aviation-related purposes, i.e., the sort of commercial/employment uses for which there is ample supply of land elsewhere in the County. In short, this is the wrong place for such development. The Conservancy for Charles County asks the Commissioners to reject the proposal.



Hal Delaplane

ⁱ Anderson, M.G., Barnett, A., Clark, M., Prince, J., Olivero Sheldon, A., and Vickery, B. 2016. Resilient and Connected Landscapes for Terrestrial Conservation. The Nature Conservancy, Eastern Conservation Science, Eastern Regional Office. Boston, MA.