

CB-4 2019

In Support

Clean Water Action is a water-oriented advocacy group with over 5,000 members in Howard County, and 37,000 in the state of Maryland. Clean Water Action supports policies that protect and improve water quality in Maryland and throughout the country.

Wetlands, streams, and steep slopes are vulnerable environmental features that need to be protected from development. Wetlands provide important ecosystem services, filtering and slowing runoff, and are an important feature in stormwater management. Streams are the direct pipeline for nutrients, pollution, and sediment downstream, and also serve as important habitat and sources of recreation for kids and other Howard County residents. Steep slopes pose a particular erosion risk and should be preserved.

Buffers around these features, especially forested buffers, are a critical tool for preserving water and habitat quality. Forest is one of the most effective ways to combat nutrient pollution in water. They decrease water velocity by soaking up stormwater, decrease water temperatures to provide a more hospitable environment for aquatic life, are a carbon sink, and provide necessary habitat for local wildlife, among other benefits. Trees can also reduce erosion by stabilizing stream banks, necessary with rising quantities of stormwater runoff and bigger storm events increasing the quantity and velocity of water in our streams and rivers..

Trees, shrubs, and plants located in sensitive areas including 100-year floodplains, intermittent and perennial streams and their buffers, and steep slopes are, per state law, to be considered priority for retention and should be left undisturbed.

When state regulations were imposed, local jurisdictions were allowed to develop waiver programs in order to provide discretion and flexibility in enforcing the law. However, each jurisdiction is given the authority to be more stringent than state minimums, and each jurisdiction can better protect their water resources. CB-4 better protects Howard County's water resources by limiting development inside the most critical areas: within the stream buffer, in wetlands, and by steep slopes.

Best,

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