

The People's Voice, LLC

3600 Saint Johns Lane, Suite D, Ellicott City, MD 21042

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Dear Council Members,

Thank you for your attention to another update of the Forest Conservation regulations. As you may recall, Howard County was not in compliance with Maryland law for a very long time. A major update was necessary in recent years. This is a key issue to remember because opposition testimony has noted this Bill being a rush to respond. Criticism also has included the notion that too many strengthening of rules are included without a framework that purportedly eases rules. The length of time we were out of compliance caused inappropriate under-enforced and under-regulated forest preservation. It caused us to be ranked by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as highest for deforestation and lowest for reforestation, in their 25 year review done in 2018. We have attached a source document. So, if we have stronger regulations for a while, it is warranted, as we are starting from an extreme deficit period.

There are many examples of developments that caused far too much deforestation under the old regulations and under the time period of inappropriate rules. Defining a forest for protection at smaller sizes, and doubling the current reforestation requirements, will help to offset the wrong that was done all those years. It will not only possibly correct course from having done the opposite for so long, but follows new Maryland State goals as well, to increase forest areas. CB30 is perfectly timely.

As you make your decisions regarding Forest Conservation updates, please keep in mind how long we were in a less than compliant state, and remember that new trees, even if they survive, take decades to come close to the benefits of removed existing trees.

Also, please be very careful when considering exceptions to new or existing Forest Conservation regulations. Applying exceptions must be done carefully. If they are granted across zones that are deemed to be chosen for high density development, say, in the General Plan, that would be pretty widespread, and a bad idea. The most intense density zones already have less concern in this area since they are allowed higher building heights.

Lastly, please keep the mitigation off-site to a minimum. After all, our County regions deserve tree equity and all the benefits forests give to communities. The amount and location allowance of replanting due to deforestation in projects is important, and not an area where we need to worry about incentivizing development. These requirements will serve commendable State goals needed for a healthy environment, and we have seen, for decades, that the high demand for market rate housing in Howard County has caused development to continue even through stronger regulations. The time is now to make sure we course correct.

Thank you.

Lisa Markovitz

President, The People's Voice

Did you know Howard Co. is ranked **WORST** in the State for Clearing Forests?!?!?!?

Acres of Forest Cleared, Replanted, Net Loss by County (FY2009–FY2016)

COUNTY	CLEARED	REPLANTED	NET LOSS	% CLEARED**	% PLANTED***
Anne Arundel*	682	61	621	45	9
Baltimore	696	116	580	27	17
Calvert	908	13	894	39	1
Caroline	60	25	35	28	47
Carroll	274	340	(64)	28	123
Cecil	232	47	185	26	20
Charles	1,559	42	1518	48	2
Dorchester	24	16	9	11	64
Frederick	764	678	86	28	89
Harford	1,238	535	701	26	43
Howard	904	422	482	50	45
Kent	36	25	11	14	71
Montgomery	1,302	738	564	31	54
Prince George's	9,074	1,968	7,106	43	22
Queen Anne's	20	14	6	3	68
St. Mary's	1,668	117	1,551	34	7
Somerset	40	15	25	20	37
Talbot*	26	51	(25)	10	192
Washington*	100	79	21	30	80
Wicomico	134	138	(4)	19	134
Worcester	253	74	179	23	253
TOTAL	19,992	5,514	14,481		

Source: MD Department of Natural Resources, from individual county PCA annual reports