



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Item #
MCPB 1-15-09

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 29, 2008
TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: Mark Pfefferle, Acting Chief, Environmental Planning *MP*
FROM: Josh Penn, Senior Planner, Environmental Planning *JP*
REVIEW TYPE: Forest Conservation Plan Review
APPLYING FOR: Amendment to a Final Forest Conservation Plan (FCP)
PLAN NAME: Woodstock Equestrian Park
PLAN NUMBER: PP2003001
PLAN TYPE: Park Facility Plan
REVIEW BASIS: Forest Conservation Regulations, Section 113.A.(2), Regulation No. 1-01AM (COMCOR) 18-01AM
ZONE: RDT
LOCATION: Located on the east and west sides of Darnestown Road north of West Hunter Road in Beallsville.
APPLICANT: Montgomery County Parks Department
ENGINEER: Loiderman Soltesz Associates, Inc.
HEARING DATE: January 15, 2009

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the amendment to the Final Forest Conservation Plan PP2003001 "Woodstock Equestrian Park" dated October 16, 2008.

BACKGROUND

The Montgomery County Planning Board approved Park Plan PP2003001 "Woodstock Equestrian Park", on March 18, 2004. The Planning Board approved the Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) PP2003001 "Woodstock Equestrian Park", with conditions, on March 18, 2004. A minor amendment to the Final Forest Conservation Plan was approved by the Environmental Planning Division on August 4, 2008, principally to restore the historic Seneca Stone Barn site. The proposed change the facility plan is to allow construction of three outdoor riding rings, a beginner/novice cross-country course, historic structure rehabilitation and/or reuse, and expanded infrastructure improvements. This plan proposes an additional 0.33-acre of forest clearing to accomplish all these goals. The changes to the Park Facility Plan require another amendment to the approved forest conservation plan.

SITE DESCRIPTION

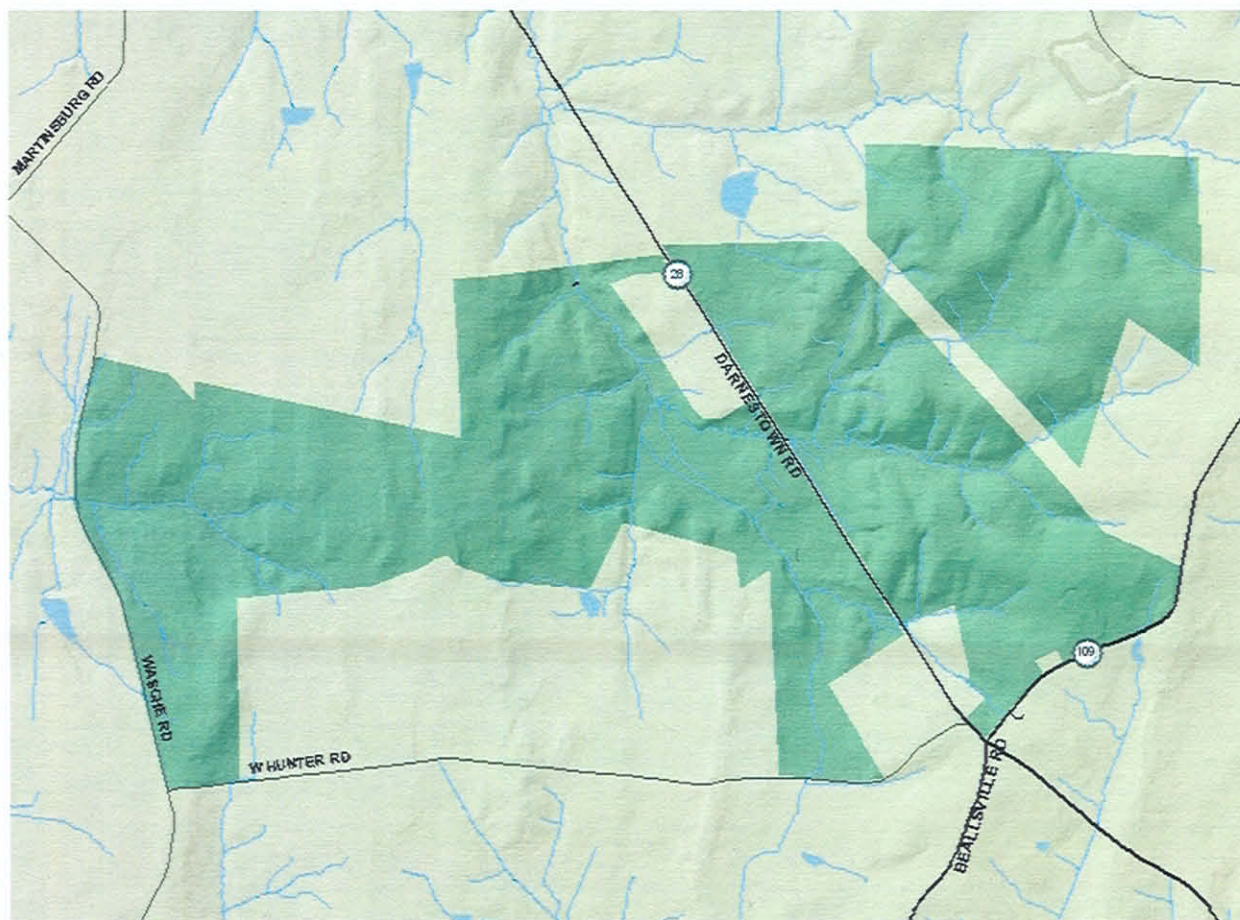
The site is located on the east and west sides of Darnestown Road north of West Hunter Road in Beallsville. This forest conservation plan covers 764.72 acres, the entirety of the Woodstock Equestrian Park.

The subject property is a mix of open agricultural fields and forest. The site contains 432.83 acres of forest and 331.89 acres of open areas and agricultural fields. The property is currently used as a park with both hiker and equestrian trails and as active farmland.

Woodstock Equestrian Park can best be described as rolling uplands with the majority of the slopes being between 0-15 percent. The steepest slopes (>15%) are mostly located on the eastern side of Route 28 and mostly within the forest and stream valley buffers (approximately 116 acres). There are two major drainage basins; Little Monocacy River and the Potomac River basins. The central and eastern parts of the park contain drain to the little Monocacy River, while the western portion of the site drains to the Potomac River. All the streams within the park are Use Class I-P.

In addition to the environmental setting the Woodstock Equestrian Park has a rich cultural setting. The park itself has four historic sites, Brewer Farm, Seneca Stone Barn, Seneca Stone House, and the Mary Fisher Farm. While adjacent and in the immediate vicinity there is an additional sixteen historic sites.

Vicinity Map



PLANNING BOARD REVIEW AUTHORITY

The Forest Conservation Regulations requires Planning Board action of certain types of modifications to an approved FCP. Section 113.A.(2) of the Forest Conservation Regulation states:

Major amendments, which entail more than a total of 5000 square feet of additional forest clearing, must be approved by the Planning Board or Planning Director (depending on who approved the original plan). Notice of each major plan amendment must be given to adjacent property owners as part of the Planning Board or Planning Director approval processes.

The proposed amendment includes the removal of an additional 12,632.4 square feet (0.29-acres) of forest and therefore constitutes a major amendment requiring Planning Board approval.

PROPOSED FOREST CONSERVATION PLAN CHANGES

This is an application to amend Final FCP PP2003001. The forest conservation plan shows the retention of 432.50 acres of forest, the removal of 0.29 acres of forest. The additional forest removal will result in the site having 259.7 acres of forest retention above the breakeven point. The breakeven point is the level at which forest planting is required.

REVIEW ISSUES

Applicant's Position

The applicant believes they have minimized forest clearing and environmental impacts to the greatest extent possible while striving to achieve the goals set forth in the approved park master plan and input from the community.

Community Issues

All adjoining and confronting property owners were notified of the proposed amendment on or about January 5, 2009. Any comments received will be forwarded to the Board.

Staff Analysis/Position

This final forest conservation plan amendment will increase the amount of total forest clearing from 0.0 acres to 0.29 acres. The amount of forest cleared is minimal, not in environmentally sensitive areas, and the property is still 259.70-acres above the breakeven point for forest retention. The breakeven point is the level in which planting requirements begin.

STAFF FINDING

Staff finds that the amount of forest clearing has been minimized, and is located in non-environmentally sensitive areas. The forest clearing is necessary to achieve the goals of the park. The applicant has done a good job minimizing forest impacts and protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

Staff recommends approval of the amendment to the Final Forest Conservation Plan PP2003001 "Woodstock Equestrian Park" dated October 16, 2008