

**THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release:

February 10, 2006

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**M-NCPPC REMINDS RESIDENTS OF INCREASED PENALTIES FOR
VIOLATING COUNTY'S FOREST CONSERVATION LAW**

SILVER SPRING, MD – To protect Montgomery County's remaining forest as part of a comprehensive plan for environmental protection, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) staff has begun to apply new, substantially increased Forest Conservation fees and penalties enacted into law by the Montgomery County Council in December 2005.

Under the newly amended Forest Conservation Law, for example, the maximum administrative civil penalty for clearing forest on public or private land increased from a maximum of \$1 per square foot to a maximum of \$9 per square foot for land properties exceeding one acre in size.

This nine-fold increase in penalties is intended to discourage property owners and others from illicit forest clearing.

In certain circumstances monetary damages alone may not be enough to deter potential violators, so Class A criminal penalties may also be assessed. These penalties allow up to a \$1,000 fine per day of violation and up to six months in jail.

“Before even thinking about cutting down trees in Montgomery County, developers, builders, homeowners, landscapers and tree maintenance crews are wise to learn about and obey the County's laws and regulations for preserving the trees that help protect our environment,” said Derick P. Berlage, M-NCPPC Chairman. “Substantial fines and possible jail time can be assessed for violations, and we're hoping to avoid that.”

Details on the new Forest Conservation Law are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/SCANNED_LEGISLATION/27-05.pdf. For general information on implementing the Forest Conservation Law or to report possible violations, call 301/495-4540 for information, or 301/495-4595 for reporting violations. Information on forest conservation can also be viewed at www.mc-mncppc.org/environment/forest.