

**THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
ATTENTION CALENDAR EDITORS**

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**PLANNING BOARD SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE
COUNTY'S NEWEST CONSERVATION PARK**

SILVER SPRING, MD – The Montgomery County Planning Board encourages public testimony on the proposed park management plan for the new Serpentine Oaks Conservation Park, located on the north side of Piney Meeting House Road in Potomac, on Thursday, November 17, 7:30 p.m., 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring.

Plans proposed for the park include an interpretive trail network to provide low impact access to the park and outdoor educational opportunities. Montgomery County's conservation parks are reserved for environmental protection and the enjoyment of nature.

Acquired beginning in 2002 through the Legacy Open Space program, the 300+ acre Serpentine Oaks Conservation Park harbors more than 20 threatened or endangered plants in a rare "serpentine" ecosystem. This unique ecosystem is profoundly influenced by the unique rock that underlies the area and supports a rare plant community that adapted to the thin soils and high concentrations of metals. Many rock outcroppings in the park expose this mottle greenish rock. Composed of a variety of oaks, the forest also includes hickory and pine trees, all of which have a short, stunted appearance even though most are mature trees.

"Our visionary Legacy Open Space program focuses on preserving the county's best natural areas, historical resources and urban open spaces," said Derick P. Berlage, Planning Board Chairman. "And this is new park is an outstanding example of the program's power to preserve unique natural features." In North America, the largest remaining serpentine ecosystems are found in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

To sign up in advance to speak, call 301-495-4600. Organizations will have five minutes to speak, and individuals have three minutes. To review the draft plan online, those interested may log on www.montgomeryparks.org.

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