

MCPB
1/16/03
Item # 2

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Division Chief, Countywide Planning Division
John Hench, Supervisor, Park Planning and Resource Analysis *J. Hench*

FROM: Brenda Sandberg, Legacy Open Space Program Manager *BS*

DATE: January 10, 2003

RE: Lockwood and Guzick Properties, part of the Batchellor's Forest subwatershed, Olney, MD

Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the Planning Board approve the removal of the Lockwood and Guzick properties from the list of Class III sites in the appendix of the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan*. The Lockwood and Guzick properties are part of the Batchellor's Forest Tributary of the Northwest Branch watershed that is identified in the appendix as an area deserving further study to identify potential Legacy natural resource sites. Staff further recommends that the natural resources on the properties be given the maximum protection available through the development review process.

Introduction

Staff has completed an evaluation of the Lockwood and Guzick Properties in Olney as a potential natural resource site in the Legacy Open Space program. The Lockwood and Guzick properties are part of the Batchellor's Forest Tributary of the Northwest Branch that is listed as a Class III natural resource in Technical Appendix D of the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan*. Class III Legacy sites were nominated for inclusion in the *Master Plan* but have not been completely evaluated for full incorporation into the Legacy Open Space program.

Staff's evaluation of the Lockwood and Guzick properties follows the process set forth in the *Master Plan* for conducting additional studies of Class III sites to designate them Class I or II Legacy sites or remove them from the Legacy program. According to the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan*, staff may conduct such a study of a Class

III site if development is proposed on the site. An applicant has submitted a preliminary plan and site plan application (#1-03026 and #8-008) for the Lockwood property. The Guzick property has already been taken through the development review process by the same applicant and has an approved subdivision and site plan. In addition, the entire Batchellor's Forest Tributary has been evaluated as part of the Olney Master Plan process. This memorandum discusses how this particular site within the tributary was judged against the criteria for selecting Legacy Open Space sites and makes a recommendation to the Planning Board for protecting the important resources on the properties.

Background

The Lockwood and Guzick properties are located in Southeast Olney between Barn Ridge Drive and Cross Timber Terrace. Both properties recently have been rezoned to LDRC. The current development proposal would result in a total of eight new single-family homes on the site. The 42-acre site is almost entirely forested (Attachment A) and contains two streams of the Batchellor's Forest Tributary to the Northwest Branch. These two properties are part of a larger block of forest that consists of 163 acres and was analyzed as part of the environmental analysis conducted for the Olney Master Plan process, the source of most of the information below.

Forest Resources

The forest stand in question is a mature deciduous, riparian forest consisting of tree species typical of Montgomery County forests (see Attachment B). Of the stand's 163 acres, approximately 17 acres are considered to be interior forest with benefits for interior-dwelling forest birds and other species and most of the interior forest occurs on the Guzick and Lockwood properties. Approximately one quarter of the entire forest stand is contained on the Guzick and Lockwood properties.

A study conducted for the Olney Master Plan analyzed this forest area and ranked its importance compared to other forested areas within the study area (see Attachment C for details). The Olney study area includes large areas of the Patuxent River and Upper Rock Creek watersheds in addition to the headwaters of the Northwest Branch. Within the Olney study area, this stand falls within the Priority 2 grouping of forest stands and is considered to be of middle quality among the 35 forest stands that make up the Priority 2 group. The study also indicated that the 17 acres of interior forest on this site are not a significant part of the overall interior habitat in the Olney study area.

This forest stand was also analyzed as part of the forest within the Batchellors Forest Tributary and as part of the Northwest Branch watershed (see Attachments C and D). The entire forest stand of 163 acres makes up 12.4% of the forest within the Batchellors Forest subwatershed and the forest on Guzick and Lockwood together make up 5.6% of the forest in the subwatershed. The stand condition is considered good to very good which is comparable to the other Priority 2 stand within Batchellors Forest and to the other high priority stands within the Northwest Branch watershed.

A significant amount of forest is already protected by public ownership and easements in the Northwest Branch watershed outside the Batchellors Forest tributary. The forest interior habitat on these two properties is a very small part of the overall forest interior habitat within the Northwest Branch.

Development as allowed under the current LDRC zone would result in some fragmentation of the upland forest on the properties and the loss of a large amount of the 17 acres of interior forest due to the encroachment of the lots. However, a significant amount of stream valley forest and some interior forest habitat will be preserved depending on the development layout.

Wetland Resources

A functional wetlands assessment was conducted in the southern part of the Olney master plan area including the Batchellor's Forest Tributary. The functional wetlands assessment values groups of wetlands according to various attributes and beneficial functions that they can perform. The assessment indicated that the wetlands in the southwestern branch of the Batchellor's Forest tributary were of medium overall functional value.

However, some vernal pools have been noted in that assessment group that provide habitat for amphibians and thus result in a higher functional value for some of the wetlands than for the overall wetland group. Some of these valuable vernal pools may occur on the Lockwood and Guzick properties. Any development on the property needs to be sensitively placed to protect any vernal pool and associated forest habitat in addition to streamside wetlands.

Aquatic Resources

The Northwest Branch is classified by the state as recreational trout waters, Class IV, indicating high quality water that can support a stocked trout fishery. Steady cold water flows through the spring and early summer are required to continue to support this use class. Preservation of forested stream buffers and keeping impervious surface levels low are the most important tools to protect the current cold water flows.

The Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS) finds that the biological stream condition of the Batchellor's Forest Tributary is good and habitat conditions are good. The CSPS places the subwatershed in the Watershed Protection Area--Remedial Level management category. The subwatershed is considered a priority for funding for instream and water quality improvement projects. Currently several stream restoration projects have been identified and funded in this subwatershed as part of the Army Corps of Engineers' restoration program for the Anacostia River. One of the stream bank restoration projects is located on the Lockwood and Guzick properties. An RFP for this project is about to be released and construction is expected to begin in fall of 2003.

The limited development allowed under the current zoning (eight single-family units) will not increase impervious surface measurably across the subwatershed and thus should not have a significant impact on the water quality of the Northwest Branch.

Issues

Natural Resources

The Batchellor's Forest Tributary was included in the Legacy Master Plan Appendix for further evaluation of the natural resources in the area. As described above, the forest and wetlands on this property are of good quality and provide important resources for wildlife in this area of the County. However, the size and significance of the forest stand does not compare favorably to other forests that have been added to the Legacy Open Space plan. The entire forest stand, not just the Lockwood and Guzick properties, is smaller than the average Legacy natural resources site. The amount of forest interior is fairly small given the total size of the stand (only 17 out of 163 acres) due to the considerable fragmentation along the edges of the forest. Likewise, the forest is not considered to be an example of a unique natural community. This forest stand is of good quality but does not meet the level of significance necessary to be considered a Legacy Open Space site, either through any unique qualities or significant size.

The functioning of the area as an ecological corridor is also of good but not exceptional quality. The Batchellor's Forest tributary does provide for a potential wildlife corridor between upper Rock Creek and the Northwest Branch. These properties and other areas within the Batchellor's Forest Tributary fall along the Green Infrastructure identified by the State of Maryland, specifically along a link between the Northwest Branch and the North Branch of Rock Creek. However, several factors limit this forest stands functionality as a wildlife corridor (see below).

Greenway Connections

In the Legacy Open Space master plan, the Greenway Connections resource category identifies the north-south connection between the Northwest Branch and the Patuxent River as a priority for a wildlife and human use corridor. However, no human trail corridor is currently envisioned for the Batchellor's Forest Tributary since other connections are planned between Rock Creek and the Northwest Branch.

Several factors limit the functionality of the Batchellors Forest subwatershed as an east-west wildlife corridor. Much of the forest is already divided among many small, developed properties that can impact the ability of wildlife to move freely through the forest and limits the amount of forest interior. In addition, areas of dense development and highway corridors provide barriers to the wildlife movement between the Northwest Branch and Rock Creek along this corridor.

Other Legacy Resource Categories

The Lockwood and Guzick properties do not significantly contribute to any other Legacy resource categories. It has been noted that the site is generally located within the heritage cluster focusing on the Underground Railroad and Quaker theme. However, this site does not contribute to the conservation or interpretation of that heritage theme.

Analysis of Overall Legacy Criteria and Specific Natural Resource Factors

Despite the good quality of the forest resources and the general policy emphasis on preserving as much interior forest and wildlife corridor as possible, these resources do not rise to the level of the exceptional resources that are typically included in the Legacy Open Space program. Staff's analysis of the Lockwood and Guzick properties' significance in relation to the overall Legacy Criteria has determined that:

- The site has no particular countywide significance in terms of its ecological community or the size and diversity of its habitats.
- The site does provide for ecological connectivity between natural areas and corridors, but the ecological benefit of the connectivity is limited by surrounding land uses.
- The site is not part of a "critical mass" of similar open space.
- The site provides little opportunity for interpretation and public education due to the difficulty of providing public access to the site.

After further analysis of specific natural resource factors as discussed in the Legacy Open Space Master Plan, staff concludes that:

- The site does not contain any unique or exemplary natural communities or extensive habitats for rare, threatened, endangered or watchlist species.
- The site does contain good quality forest, but does not contain a significantly large area of contiguous forest or a diversity of habitats.
- The land is not well located to provide a buffer to other sensitive resources and has only limited value as a wildlife or human use corridor between significant natural areas.

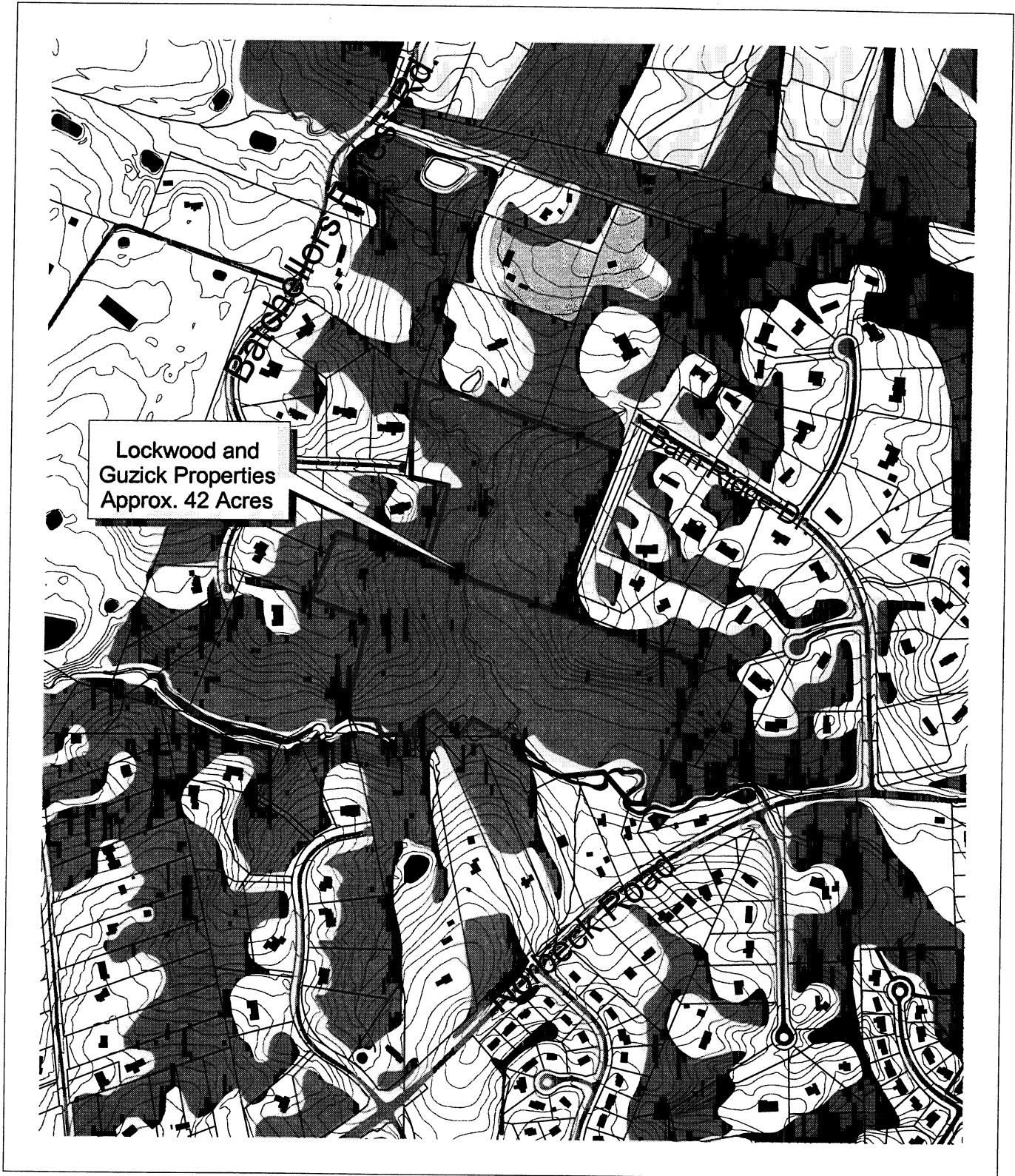
Finally, the Legacy Open Space program must prioritize its personnel and financial resources to protect the most important natural resources in the county. Based on the above analysis, staff recommends the Planning Board not designate either the Lockwood or Guzick properties as Legacy Open Space sites under the Natural Resources category of the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan*.

Implications of Removal from Legacy/Implementation Issues

Given the good quality of the forest stand on these properties and the many benefits of preserving wildlife connections and the water quality in the Northwest Branch, staff believe that the forest on the Lockwood property and others in this area should be protected as much as possible. Staff recommends that the maximum protection of the forest and wetlands on the property should be implemented through application of the Environmental Guidelines and other policies through the development review process.

The Olney Master Plan process, now underway, should determine if there are any other sites in the Batchellors Forest tributary that warrant designation for protection under Legacy Open Space. The removal of the Guzick and Lockwood sites does not constrain consideration of other sites in the tributary.

Lockwood and Guzick Properties



Lockwood and Guzick Properties
Approx. 42 Acres

-  Roads
-  Building
-  Streams
-  Lockwood & Guzick
-  Parkland
-  Property Lines
- Land Cover**
-  Woodlands
-  Nurseries
-  Pasture
-  Open Land

400 0 400 800 Feet



ATTACHMENT B

Batchellors Forest Stand 1 (BF1)

Forest stand evaluation of Lockwood and Guzick properties

Species List: Trees

*Tulip Poplar (15-28" dbh dominant, a few 30-35" dbh)
American Beech (mostly understory, one 28" dbh on stream bank)
Musclewood (Carpinus)
Red Oak
American Holly
Red Maple
Slippery Elm
Sycamore
Virginia Pine
Southern Red Oak

Understory species

*Spicebush
Poison Ivy
Viburnum Dentatum
Japanese Barberry +
Japanese Honeysuckle +
Privet +
Bush Honeysuckle +

* = dominant species

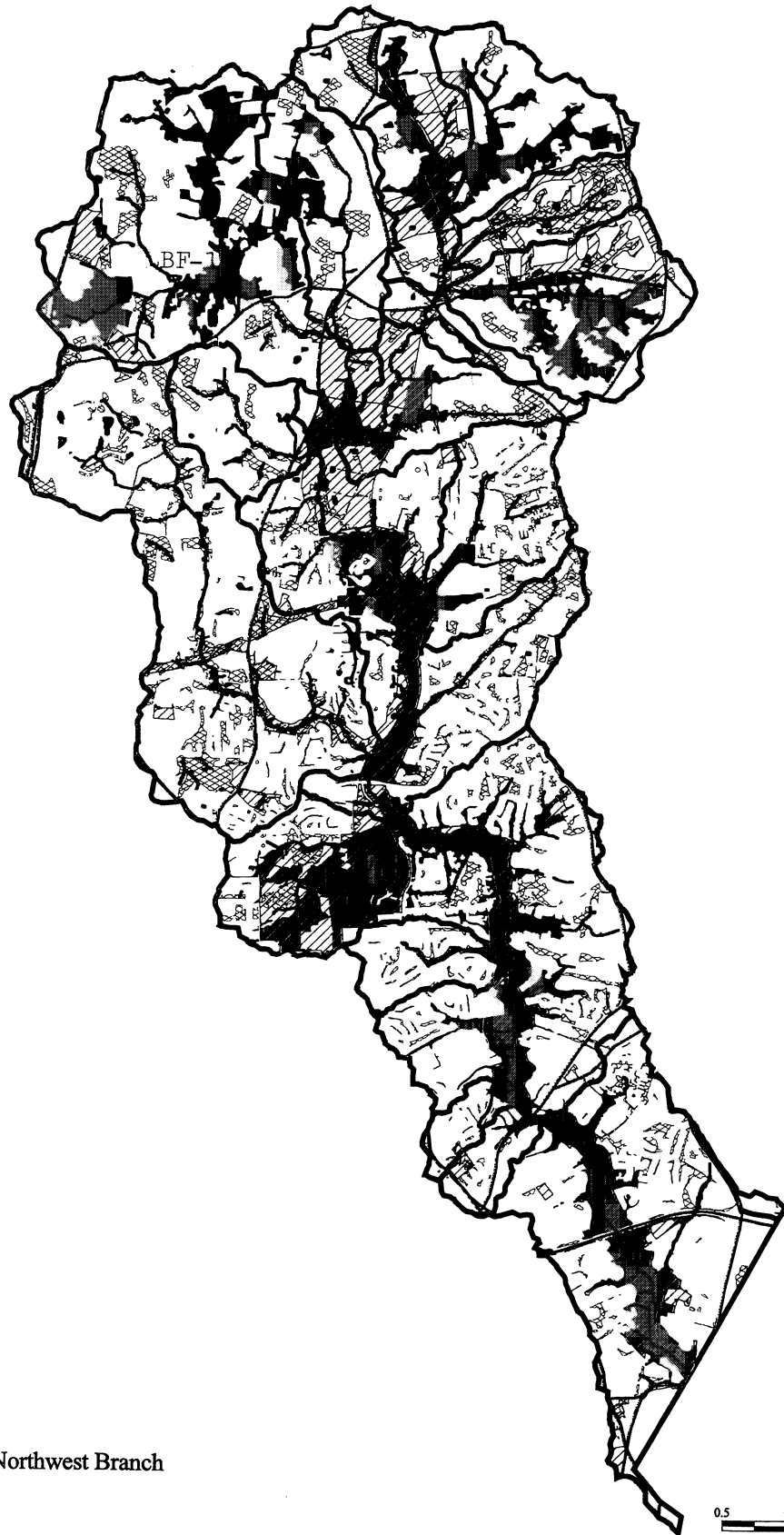
+ = non-native invasives







Basically, a Tulip Poplar forest with dominant trees between 15-28" dbh with some scattered specimen trees at 30-35" dbh. A good quality forest, fairly consistent, with Tulip Poplar dominant, scattered oak, some Virginia Pine. Larger Beech and Sycamore along the streams in a scattered pattern. Spicebush and American Beech dominate understory. Non-native invasives present but not bad.

Carole Bergmann, Forest Ecologist
January 7, 2003

- Of the 11 subwatersheds with greater than 25% forest, only 5 are rated good (3) or excellent (2) by the CSPS. Batchellors Forest is rated good. For comparison, the subwatershed with the largest percent forest (Wheaton Park @ 48%) is rated fair. Thus, imperviousness is a more important factor to CSPS water quality rating than percent forest cover.
- Northwest Branch contains nine forest stands that can be categorized as Priority 2, including BF-1 and one other in Batchellors Forest tributary. Three stands within the Northwest Branch watershed can be categorized as Priority 1.
- Almost all the stands are protected in MNCPPC park land, except for two Priority 2 and one Priority 1 stand in Batchellors Forest subwatershed and a Priority 2 stand in the Sandy Spring subwatershed – both in the Olney study area.
- The potential forest interior dwelling species habitat provided by the BF-1 stand that includes Lockwood is a very small part of the overall habitat in the Northwest Branch watershed.
- Stand condition of BF-1 is good to very good (based on species composition, tree size, overall health, and aesthetics). The same can be said for the other Priority 2 stand within Bachelors Forest subwatershed, and for the majority of the other high priority stands within the Northwest Branch watershed.

Northwest Branch



-  Major Roads
-  Streams
-  Parks
-  Priority Forest
-  Forest
-  Subwatersheds in Northwest Branch

0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles