

Table 2 - Staff responses to Public Hearing Testimony

**Topic 3: Summary of Public Hearing Testimony  
Master Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park  
December 8, 2003**

SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
Friends of Callithea Farm Organization (Mary Siegfried)	Do not want to lose any trails that riders at Callithea currently have access to.	The current plan builds on the recommendations for sustainable trails as first articulated in the Trail Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (M-NCPPC, 1989) and expands the regional trail network for hikers, equestrians, and cyclists.
Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement Conservation - MAGIC (Bob DeGroot)	Reiterate purpose of Conservation Parks as described in PROS. Notes existing now and River Rd. has fragmented park. Trails should mirror row. Opposed to new trails that would add additional fragmentation.	See discussion in packet: Topic 2: Trail Policies in Conservation Parks
Montgomery Group of the Sierra Club (Ron Lacos)	Montgomery County Group of Sierra Club ok with plan south of River Road – not ok with plan north of River Road. The Club does not consider bicycling as a passive recreational activity. Nor does the Club consider it appropriate in conservation parks.	See discussion in packet: Topic 2: Trail Policies in Conservation Parks
Maryland Native Plant Society (John Parrish)	Maryland Native Plant Society ok with plan south of River Road. – not ok with plan north of River Road. Concerned about forest fragmentation, spread of non-native vegetation suggests using gasoline corridor for trail north of River Rd. – marry this proposal with floodplain use. (Note in work session staff's previous response to this proposal).	Staff shares the same concerns regarding impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and additional fragmentation of high quality forest in Blockhouse Point Conservation Park. See Topic 1, Element 1 and Figure 2 for staff's response.
Sustainable Montgomery (R.G. Steinman)	No trails should result in additional fragmentation. No mountain bikes. Follow recommendations in Potomac Master Plan – out of park connections to canal for bikes  Check definitions in PROS for Conservation Park	The Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan (M-NCPPC, 2002) establishes the overall planning objectives for this corridor. They key recommendations are summarized on page 8 of the Public Hearing Draft Blockhouse Point Master Plan. The Muddy Branch Trail Corridor Plan removed the previously proposed hard surface trail from the lower portion of Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park. The Potomac Master Plan's bikeway element supports this recommendation by proposing a bike path along Travilah Road. Having this parallel bike path is a viable alternative to locating a hard surface park trail in an environmentally challenging section of the stream valley park. The Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan (M-NCPPC, 2002) proposes a natural surface trail for all users (hikers, equestrians, and cyclists) the entire length of the stream valley. The Master Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park has affirmed this recommendation and recommends locating the trail in areas where environmental impacts from a natural surface trail can be minimized.  See discussion in packet under Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks

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Jim Fary	<p>Opposed to hikers, bikers, &amp; equestrians on steep trails – safety concerns on steep slopes. Proposes using gasoline pipeline for shared use trail.</p> <p>Conservation Parks should be reserved for people that enjoy nature.</p>	<p>Staff is also concerned about the safety of trail users and designs/engineers trails accordingly.</p> <p>See staff response to J. Parrish.</p> <p>See discussion in packet: under Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks</p>
David Scull - MORE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best location for un-paved recreational trails. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Views</li> <li>- Elevation changes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• MORE proposed a 12-mile system built at no cost to county.</li> <li>• Refers to dreadful system of historical military roads.</li> <li>• Referred to Countywide Rec Board proposal supporting bike trails</li> <li>• Argues that natural surface trails do not result in impacts to or loss of trees.</li> <li>• Park use helps the course of conservation.</li> </ul>	<p>See Topic 2: Staff responses to Planning Board Questions during the Public Hearing for a discussion of the countywide park trails network and how the needs of different user groups are met. Agree that more trails are needed for all users to provide balance of trail opportunities across the county. However, there are many trail opportunities for cyclists in the western and northern portions of the county, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Black Hill Regional Park;</li> <li>2) Little Bennett Regional Park;</li> <li>3) Seneca Creek Greenway;</li> <li>4) Schaeffer Farm in Seneca Creek State Park, and</li> <li>5) Cabin John Regional Park</li> </ol> <p>In addition, the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan (M-NCPPC, 2002) recommends a 5-mile long system from Rte 28 to the north to the C&amp;P Canal towpath to the south. The Master Plan for Blockhouse Point Master Park implements this recommendation by identifying a preferred alignment throughout Blockhouse Point north and south of River Road. Opening a mile long segment further north is part of the FY04-06 Trail Work Program. Given the trail opportunities in the larger geographic area, the emphasis in Blockhouse Point can rightfully be focused on the stewardship and interpretation of natural and cultural resources.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Says no public interest in local interpretation of civil war sites.</li> </ul>	<p>Public interest in the Civil War is very high, as evidenced by the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montgomery County Civil War Round table is the largest of its kind on the east coast.</li> <li>• Monocacy National Battlefield, a small battle ground just across Montgomery County's border to the north, has 17,000 visitors a year.</li> <li>• Every year a local group reenacts the Confederate invasion of Maryland in September 1862 by wading across the Potomac River at White's Ford.</li> <li>• Hundreds of people attended the reenactment of Jeb Stuart's invasion of Rockville last June, and hundreds more attended the reenactment of Jubal Early's army's passing through Gaithersburg last July.</li> </ul>

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	<p>To help meet public interest in the Civil War, numerous signs have been erected to commemorate Civil War events. The Antietam Campaign and the Gettysburg Campaign trails have been marked, as well as Jeb Stuart's Raid through Rockville, June, 1863, for a total of more than 20 signs in Montgomery County alone. The "Jubal Early Attack on Washington" will soon be marked also. See <a href="http://www.civilwartrails.com">www.civilwartrails.com</a> for more information.</p> <p>None of the sites mentioned by Mr. Scull are overgrown with weeds. Fort Stevens Cemetery on 16th St. is a National Cemetery, as is the Ball's Bluff Cemetery in Virginia. The three passes defended by Confederates in the Battle of South Mountain are all under either state or federal park jurisdiction and are well cared for. In Gathland State Park at the southernmost pass, stands the remarkable and oft visited Monument to Civil War Correspondents.</p> <p>Staff agrees that parks are for people.</p>	<p>Staff believes that individual opinions on this matter vary. Some park users consider unimproved parkland wilderness. Others extend the concept to the best natural areas in Conservation, Stream Valley and Regional Parks. Regardless of individual opinions of the user public, staff is committed to balancing the stewardship of natural, archaeological, and historical resources with recreation in County parks.</p> <p>Staff agrees and also believes the current Trail Concept Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park achieves the right balance between resource protection and trail-based recreation.</p>
Craig Hunt	<p>Avid mountain biker. People oriented point of view. Advocates park accessibility for people interested in all sorts of recreational activities.</p> <p>Wilderness in Montgomery County is a fantasy.</p>	<p>Staff disagrees. See discussion in packet: Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks.</p> <p>Staff agrees.</p> <p>Staff is also concerned about forest fragmentation and the impacts of non-native invasive species on native plants. See staff response to J. Parrish. Also important to recognize the Department's efforts in this regard, e.g., the Weed Warriors Program.</p>
Barbara Sollner-Webb	<p>Park is a very historic area, used for centuries. Parks trails relative to most, are in fairly good shape. Current number of hikers &amp; horseback riders seem appropriate. Concerned that possible bike access could cause impacts – park could easily be overrun based on its attractiveness. Does not want to see the historic and attractive aspects of the park impacted.</p>	<p>See staff response to Sustainable Montgomery (R.G. Steinman)</p>
West Montgomery County Citizens Association (Ginny Bames)	<p>County has few resources as unique as Blockhouse – nature, culture, history and Montgomery Counties Yellowstone. Underlying flaw in plan – Muddy Branch Trail Corridor Plan. Decisions in Muddy Branch Trail Corridor Plan – to allow bicycles – runs counties to definition of conservation park and passive recreation in PROS.</p> <p>Does not like shared use trail through park; this is detrimental to stewardship of the park and its resources.</p> <p>Supports proposal for Interpretive Facility at Callithea Farm. Would like to see it encompass civil war as well as nature.</p> <p>Concerned about invasive plant threats. Volunteers based and not adequate.</p>	<p>Staff disagrees. See discussion in packet: Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks.</p> <p>Staff agrees.</p> <p>Staff is also concerned about forest fragmentation and the impacts of non-native invasive species on native plants. See staff response to J. Parrish. Also important to recognize the Department's efforts in this regard, e.g., the Weed Warriors Program.</p>

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	<p>Many equestrian users not respecting trail use as mandated by current signage.</p> <p>Likes trail plan south of River Rd. but not north of River Rd.</p>	<p>Staff agrees. However, staff also believes that preparation and implementation of a formal trail signage plan for the park coupled with education would help.</p> <p>See staff response to J. Parrish and Topic 1, Element 1 in the packet.</p>
<p>Potomac Bridle and Hiking Trail Association (Elaine Jones)</p>	<p>Has ridden to overlooks – knows what the public is missing. Horses do not destroy trails – lack of maintenance does.</p> <p>Wants access to bluffs and internal trails.</p> <p>Department should focus on building sustainable trails – building and maintenance techniques.</p> <p>Blockhouse Point offers the best opportunity to expand trails. References MORES offer to build an extensive trail system at Blockhouse Point open to all users.</p>	<p>The public is welcome to access the overlooks on foot as permitted in the Trail Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (M-NCPPC, 1989) and recommended in the current Trail Concept Plan.</p>
<p>MidAtlantic Off Road Enthusiasts – MORE (Dave Magill)</p>	<p>Department should focus on building sustainable trails – building and maintenance techniques.</p> <p>Blockhouse Point offers the best opportunity to expand trails. References MORES offer to build an extensive trail system at Blockhouse Point open to all users.</p>	<p>Agree- <u>all</u> natural surface trails should be sustainable.</p>
<p>Ronald Alt - MORE</p>	<p>MORE wants more trail access for mountain bikes. Muddy Branch trail corridor is not enough.</p> <p>Benefits from mountain biking – fast growing sport. Mountain bikes do no more damage than footprints. MORE stands ready to help w/ construction and maintenance.</p> <p>Mountain bikes are willing to accommodate other users and share trails.</p> <p>Misses easy access to Mountain bike trails as is available in VA.</p> <p>All trails in park should be open to all users.</p>	<p>Staff believes the current <u>Trail Concept Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park</u> adequately balances stewardship of the park's sensitive natural, archaeological, and historical resources with trail-based recreation for hikers, equestrians, and cyclists.</p> <p>Agree that more trails are needed to meet demands of all trail uses: mountain bikes, horses and hikers. This topic must be addressed at the Countywide Level (see packet discussion)</p> <p>Staff welcomes MORES involvement in the natural surface trails program. Also see Topic 2: Staff responses to Planning Board questions during the Public Hearing.</p>
<p>Patricia Bunn - MORE</p>	<p>MORE wants more trail access for mountain bikes. Muddy Branch trail corridor is not enough.</p> <p>Benefits from mountain biking – fast growing sport. Mountain bikes do no more damage than footprints. MORE stands ready to help w/ construction and maintenance.</p> <p>Mountain bikes are willing to accommodate other users and share trails.</p> <p>Misses easy access to Mountain bike trails as is available in VA.</p> <p>All trails in park should be open to all users.</p>	<p>Staff does not believe that all natural surface trails should be open to all users. Rather the decision regarding trail use should be based on consideration of issues involving trail planning objectives, environmental impact assessment, responsibilities for resource stewardship, recreational needs, accessibility issues, monitoring, maintenance, and public safety.</p>
<p>James Freemont</p>	<p>Hiker loves park. Delete shared use trail. Construct no new trails. He is a bicyclist who does not believe bikes should be allowed in park. Notes that horse droppings introduce exotic invasives to park.</p> <p>Wants more and better signage.</p> <p>Wants more frequent park police presence.</p>	<p>The focus of the plan's recommendations for cyclists is to provide a continuous natural surface trail to the C &amp; O Canal National Historical Park. In the most sensitive area of the park (south MD Route 28) cyclists will use an existing, gravel, maintenance road to access the C&amp;O Canal.</p> <p>Agree: This issue will be dealt with during implementation of the park master plan.</p> <p>Given the size of the County park system and the size of the Park Police Force, officers must rotate through the park system and cannot generally maintain a continued presence in each and every park.</p>

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Austin Steo - MORE	<p>Does not want a visitor center – will encourage more visitation.</p> <p>Mountain bikers want trails open to all users. Notes that literature includes mountain bike use with other passive recreational activities. Believes that a history of equestrian at Blockhouse Point is not a reason to exclude bikes.</p>	<p>Staff believes that an Interpretive Center will facilitate public appreciation for the park's natural, archaeological, and historical resources and thereby contribute in a positive way to stewardship efforts.</p> <p>Staff does not believe that all natural surface trails should be open to all users. Rather the decision regarding trail use should be based on consideration of issues involving trail planning objectives, environmental impact assessment, responsibilities for resource stewardship, recreational needs, accessibility issues, monitoring, maintenance, and public safety. The current Trail Concept Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park does not exclude bikes. If the plan is adopted, bikes will be permitted on the Shared-Use All natural surface trail in the Muddy Branch Stream Valley between MD Route 28 and the C&amp;O Canal National Historical Park.</p>
Delores Milmoe – Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS)	<p>ANS uses park as setting for conservation and outdoor education programs.</p> <p>ANS supports development of N.R. management plan &amp; comprehensive inventory of wildlife.</p> <p>Shared use trail north of River Rd. is not desired because of its impacts to high value forests.</p> <p>Endorses protection of natural &amp; cultural resources. Opposed to uses that cause impacts to forests.</p> <p>Staff needs to document problems w/ shared use trails at Shaeffer Farm and elsewhere.</p> <p>Wants to see shared use trail aligned along R-O-W.</p> <p>Shared use and heavy traffic cause maintenance problems. Shared use causes friction between users groups.</p> <p>Can't accommodate all users in one park, pay attention to policy guidance in PROS.</p> <p>Bikes cause damage – look at Shaeffer Farm video. Can't accommodate all users.</p>	<p>Staff is pleased that ANS finds parks useful for its programs.</p> <p>Staff agrees.</p> <p>Staff is also concerned about forest fragmentation and the impacts of non-native invasive species on native plants. See staff response to J. Parrish and Topic 1, Element I in the packet.</p> <p>Staff agrees. Our greatest challenge is to balance the stewardship of natural and cultural resources in parks with the need to provide a variety of recreational opportunities for park users.</p> <p>See packet discussion under Topic 2: Management and use of natural surface trails.</p> <p>See Topic 1: Element 1 in packet.</p> <p>Staff agrees that in general shared use trails require more maintenance than those designated Hiker Only trails. Also see Management and use of natural surface trails under Topic 2 in the packet.</p> <p>Park managers have not reported significant or on-going problems with shared use trails in the County parks.</p> <p>See discussion under Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks.</p> <p>See discussion regard Schaeffer Farm under Topic 2: Management and use of natural surface trails in the packet.</p>
Charles Pritchard  North Potomac Citizens Assoc. (Sandy Liu)		

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<p>Mark Barson</p>	<p>Trail plans connect the dots; accommodate recreation at the expense of natural resources.</p> <p>Proposes bicycles use Quince Orchard Rd. as opposed to in Muddy Branch Valley. Rides at Callithea.</p> <p>30 riders/weekend. Conditions are better now that Callithea is not a hack barn.</p> <p>Need to expand equestrian trail system, like sharing trails.</p>	<p>See discussion under Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks.</p> <p>See response to Sustainable Montgomery (RG Steinman).</p> <p>See discussion of equestrian trail use under Topic 2: Management and use of natural surface trails.</p> <p>Staff agrees that conditions are better at Callithea now than they were in the late 1980s.</p> <p>Staff does not believe that all natural surface trails should be open to all users. Rather the decision regarding trail use should be based on consideration of issues involving trail planning objectives, environmental impact assessment, responsibilities for resource stewardship, recreational needs, accessibility issues, monitoring, maintenance, and public safety. Staff believes the Trail concept plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park adequately balances stewardship of the park's sensitive natural, archaeological, and historical resources with trail-based recreation for hikers, equestrians, and cyclists.</p>
<p>Martin Beam - Mountain Biker</p>	<p>Like to experience nature on a mountain bike. Claims mountain bikers and mountain bike use improve trails.</p> <p>Damage at Shaeffer Farm caused by horses and motorized trail bikes.</p> <p>Roads are not a viable option for cyclists.</p> <p>Offer to do lots of trail maintenance.</p>	<p>Staff appreciates the fact that many cyclists enjoy nature from their bikes. Staff has found that in general shared use trails require more maintenance than hiker only trails. Also see Management and use of natural surface trails under Topic 2 in the packet.</p> <p>See the discussion of Schaeffer Farm under Topic 2: Management and use of natural surface trails.</p> <p>Staff believes that bicycle shoulders, paved trails, and Shared-use All natural surface trails are a better option for cyclists.</p> <p>Staff appreciates the offer. Suggests potential volunteers contact the Volunteer Coordinator for Natural Surface Trails at (301) 650-4395.</p>