

Figure 3 - Original Trail Plan Map from the 1989 Blockhouse Point Trail Master Plan

### Element 3

- A *Hiker Only* Natural Surface Trail network within Blockhouse Point Conservation Park.

The major purpose of this element of the plan is to provide a natural surface trail network for the sole use of hikers. This action is consistent with previous Board policy as adopted in the Trail Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (M-NCPPC, 1989) and is intended to ensure the on-going interpretation, appreciation, protection, and enjoyment of the park's most sensitive natural and cultural resources – including the two scenic overlooks of the Potomac River.

In addition, the Trail Concept Plan (**Figure 1**) reflects a shared request that arose from all trail user groups between the time of staff's last public meeting in September 2003 and the Public Hearing in December 2003. This request was for a direct connection from the main park entrance located south of River Road to the Shared-Use – All natural surface trail north of River Road (**Figure 2**). This connection follows, in an easterly direction, the firm and stable bed of old River Road and allows trails users more direct access to the trail system north of River Road. Although this connection was shown in the former trail plan for the park (M-NCPPC, 1989), it was never formally implemented.

### Topic 2: Staff responses to Planning Board questions during the Public Hearing.

During the Public Hearing, Planning Board members requested staff provide answers to the following:

- 1) **A countywide overview of existing and proposed natural surface trails;**
- 2) **Management and use of natural surface trails; and**
- 3) **Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks.**

Staff's response to these questions follows.

#### **1) A countywide overview of existing and proposed natural surface trails.**

##### The Countywide Park Trails Plan (M-NCPPC, 1998)

The Countywide Park Trails Plan (M-NCPPC, 1998) proposes an interconnected system of natural surface and hard surface trail corridors. The key element of the natural surface system is connectivity between the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers. Three "cross-county" greenway corridors provide linkage between these two significant natural features. Other trail corridors of countywide significance include the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park trail where the intent of the trail facility is to provide linkage to the C&O National Historic Park, the towpath, and destinations north and south.

The proposed countywide natural surface trail system (M-NCPPC, 1998) totals about 175 miles. A little less than half of the network is currently open to public use. More detail on the existing trail network follows.

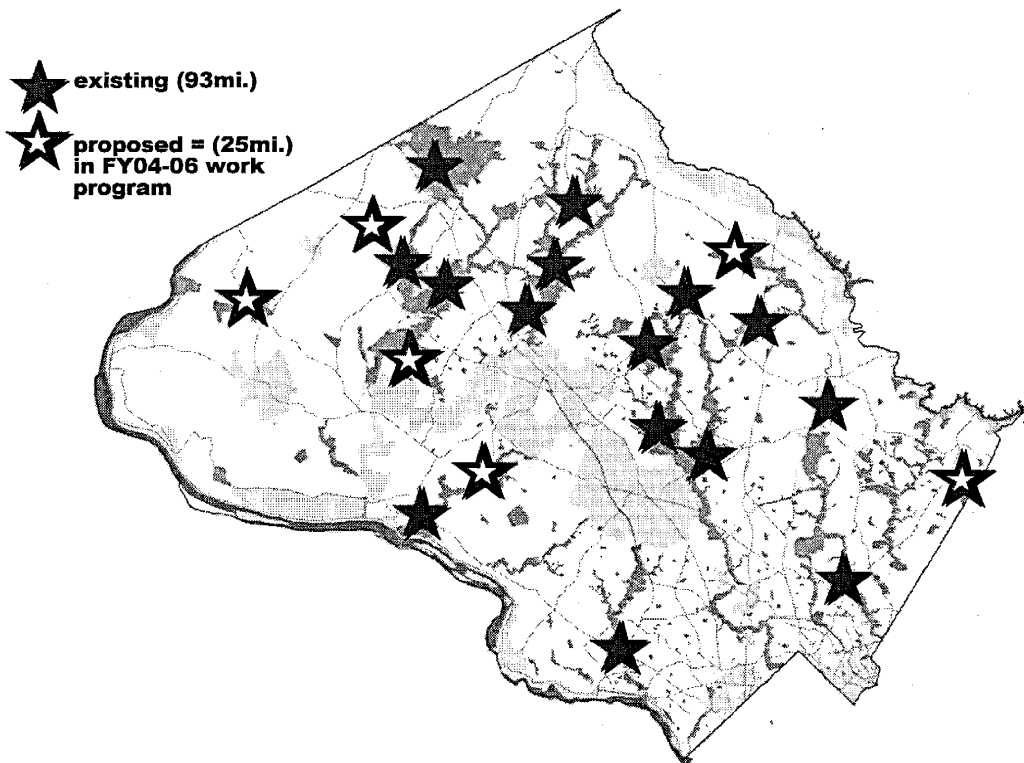
### Location and Length of Natural Surface Trails

Sanctioned trails are defined as those natural surface trails currently existing in County parks that are named, signed, mapped, and regularly maintained. **Figure 4** shows the location of all sanctioned trails in the County park system. Staff recognizes that there are many, existing, non-sanctioned natural surface trails in County parks as well. Park regulations permit hikers in all parks and once a foot-path is established, people tend to use it on a regular basis. In fact, most all of the major countywide parks have an informal network of non-sanctioned, natural surface trails. Non-sanctioned natural surface trails range from informal “people’s choice” trails to park trails that are missing one or more of the criteria (e.g., mapping or signage) necessary to declare them officially sanctioned even though they may be regularly maintained by maintenance staff in the Park Regions and/or volunteers.

At present, there are approximately 93 miles of officially sanctioned natural surface trails in the County parks. Staff do not know the number of miles of non-sanctioned, natural surface trails throughout the system although some have been mapped to facilitate use by staff, especially Park Police.

As noted in the Planning Board approved FY 04-06 Trails work program, approximately 25 miles of additional, sanctioned, natural surface trails will be open to the public in the next two years. The locations of these trail segments are also shown in **Figure 4**.

*Figure 4 – Sanctioned Natural Surface Trails Countywide*

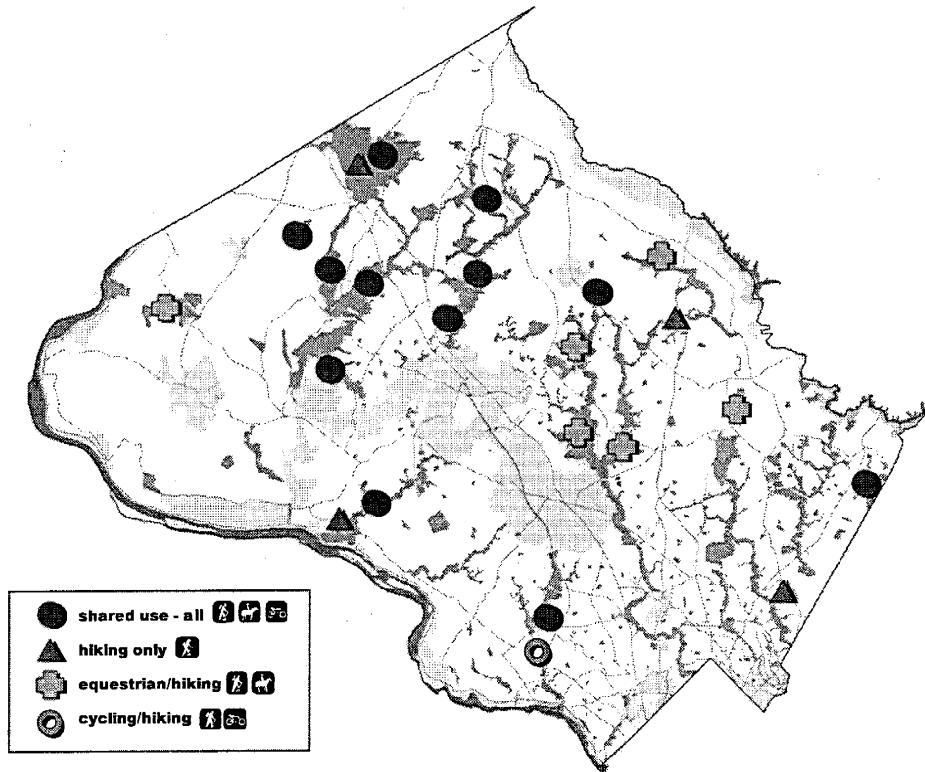


### Permitted Activities on Sanctioned Trails

There are three key activities associated with natural surface trails: hiking, horse-back riding, and biking. All sanctioned natural surface trails are signed with “patches” that illustrate the permitted trail use or uses.

Of the 118 miles of existing and programmed sanctioned trails, a little less than half are open to shared use by hikers, equestrians, and cyclists, *i.e.*, *Shared-Use All*. With regard to trail miles available for each activity, hikers enjoy access to all 118 miles (100%), whereas equestrians and cyclists enjoy access to 76 miles (64%) and 54 miles (46%), respectively (**Figure 5**). **Table 1** provides a tabular summary of permitted activities on sanctioned, natural surface trails throughout the County park system.

*Figure 5 – Permitted Trail Activities on Sanctioned Natural Surface Trails Countywide*



*Table 1 – Overview of Sanctioned Natural Surface Park Trails by Use in Montgomery County Parks*

	Shared by				Total Miles
	All	Hiker Only	Hiker/Equestrian	Hiker/Biking	
Sanctioned	43%	39%	15%	3%	93
To be Sanctioned by 6/06	46%	10%	44%	0	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	44%	33%	21%	2.6%	118
<b>Miles of Trail Open to User Groups</b>					
Hikers	118 miles (all trails are open to hikers; one-third are hiker only)				
Equestrians	76 miles				
Cyclists	54 miles				

When planning and maintaining natural surface trails, staff are increasingly challenged with accommodating the different interests and skill levels within user groups. By in large, staff's focus is on providing trails that are oriented to the casual hiker, equestrian, and cyclist. However, there are clearly users within each group who seek and increasingly demand more challenging trail experiences. Hikers as a group, for example, include those who enjoy a casual walk across a level to moderately sloped woodland to those who relish the rigorous physical challenge of more rolling terrain and steep stream valleys. Equestrians include those who enjoy a casual trail ride to those engaged in the exciting sport of fox chasing. Finally, cyclists include riders on hybrid bikes seeking a quiet ride in a park setting to more adventuresome riders on mountain bikes looking for trails with varied, challenging terrain and a variety of trail obstacles such as downed logs, rocks, and water features.

For those interested in the more challenging aspects of permitted trail activities, we try to provide specially designed facilities in specific parks. Hiking only trails have been planned and are maintained in many of our best Conservation Parks. A network of trails open to fox chasing is available via permit at Hoyle's Mill Conservation Park. Staff are currently working with volunteers from the mountain bike advocacy group, MORE (Maryland Off Road Enthusiasts) to develop a network of mountain bike accessible trails in Fairland Recreation Park. All these examples reflect staff's on-going efforts to accommodate natural surface trail users seeking the more challenging aspects of their sport.

Staff recognize that accommodating the more challenging demands of equestrians and cyclists (especially mountain bike enthusiasts) will require greater emphasis in future park planning efforts.

## **2) Management and use of natural surface trails**

Testimony from the Public Hearing included requests by equestrians and cyclists to provide more shared use, natural surface trails for their enjoyment. In response to these requests, the Planning Board asked the following questions:

- a. Could better management techniques allow equestrians access to more trails at Blockhouse Point?**
- b. What have been the impacts at Schaeffer Farm in Seneca Creek State Park in terms of mountain bike use?**
- c. What is the current experience elsewhere in our park system in terms of shared use trails?**

**a. Could better management techniques allow equestrians access to more trails at Blockhouse Point?**

The Callithea Farm Stables Lease was made and entered into on September 30, 2003 by and between the M-NCPPC and George Sengstack, Manager of Callithea Farm. Article IV – Grant of Rights to Lessee specifies in section 4.5 that the Lessee will develop a Soil and Water Conservation Plan and a Nutrient Management Plan for Callithea Farm. The plans – which include waste management measures, pasture

stocking rates, sediment control measures, and a reference to establishment of stream buffers – were prepared in cooperation with Montgomery County Soil Conservation Service and Commission staff and cover the period 2002-2004. The plans indicate that the farm manager expects to accommodate approximately 65 horses at the farm – about 30 in stalls and 35 in pastures.

A survey of equestrians at Callithea Farm in 2001 revealed that 15 of 17 survey respondents participated in trail rides and the overwhelming majority of these rides incorporated the equestrian trail in Blockhouse Point Park as part of the trail riding experience. The survey also revealed that 14 of 17 riders go out in all seasons and most ride about once a week.

Staff believes that weather related trail management techniques have the greatest chance of success. Both horses and bikes can damage trails and negatively affect the trail tread when conditions are wet and muddy. This problem is greatest from late-November through mid-April. As discussed below, trails are closed during the wettest months of the year at one local facility operated by the State of Maryland in order to reduce adverse, user related trail impacts.

At Blockhouse Point, staff's concern for trail sustainability (as well as the protection and preservation of adjacent, natural, archaeological, and historical resources) goes beyond wet weather related impacts. As noted in the Trail Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (M-NCPPC, 1989), approximately 90% of the soils at Blockhouse Point are rated as severe for trail use. This is especially true for the thin and fragile soils of the slopes and rock outcrops overlooking the Potomac River as well as the poorly drained and wet soils of the Muddy Branch floodplain. Soils in the park are susceptible to damage from horses and bikes during wet and dry periods of the year.

The Trail Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (M-NCPPC, 1989) was developed specifically in response to damage caused to the park's soils and other natural, archaeological, and historical resources by a combination of all-terrain vehicles accessing the park via the Muddy Branch stream valley and equestrians originating from Callithea Farm. Staff believes that implementation of the 1989 plan, coupled with an aggressive, concurrent program of site restoration, has allowed for adequate protection of the park's natural, archaeological and historical resources over the years.

Three other concerns related to the Master Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park affect staff's view of management-based approaches to trail use:

#### **Concern 1**

The first concern is related to the interpretation, appreciation, and enjoyment of the park's unique natural, archaeological, and historical resources by solitary hikers or larger formal groups that may be led by interpretive naturalists, resource specialists, teachers, or volunteers. Staff believes that the quality of this experience should not be diminished by distractions caused by equestrians and cyclists.

#### **Concern 2**

The second concern is related to the protection and preservation of the park's resources. Long-term stewardship of these resources is best assured if the concurrent

recreational activity causes the least amount of environmental impact possible. Thus, a natural surface trail designated as *Hiker Only* is the most logical choice for a park related improvement and associated use in the park's sensitive areas.

### **Concern 3**

The third concern is related to the regional nature of both the *Shared Use – Hiker/Equestrian Only* natural surface trail loop and the north-south *Shared Use – All* natural surface trail in the Muddy Branch Stream Valley (See the Trail Concept Plan, **Figure 1**). Equestrians entering Blockhouse Point Conservation Park may originate from Callithea Farm, either of the two trail connections to the C&O Canal National Historic Park (one of which passes through Callithea Farm), the main parking lot on River Road, or the *Shared Use – All* natural surface trail in the Muddy Branch Stream Valley. Therefore, regulating only the number of horse-back riders originating from Callithea Farm and not from the park's other access points will not necessarily ensure there are no trail related impacts to the park's sensitive and significant resources.

Given consideration of these multiple issues, staff does not believe that better management techniques could allow equestrians (or bikes) more access to trails at Blockhouse Point Conservation Park. Staff does believe that the proposed Trail Concept Plan (**Figure 1**) – with it's network of natural surface trails and permitted uses - adequately balances resource stewardship and opportunities for trail-based recreation.

#### **b. What have been the impacts at Schaeffer Farm in Seneca Creek State Park in terms of mountain bike use?**

Based on conversations with Lt. Walter F. Brown, Park Manager, Seneca Creek State Park, 11950 Clopper Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878. Telephone (301)924-2127:

Schaeffer Farm is part of Seneca Creek State Park, located south of Interstate 270, near Gaithersburg, MD. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages the park. The trail system at Schaeffer Farm was proposed, designed, and built by volunteers from the mountain bike advocacy group, MORE. MORE volunteers provide most of the trail maintenance. Although the trail system is also open to hikers and equestrians, the vast majority of trail users are mountain biking enthusiasts. The facility features several natural surface trail loops covering almost 12 miles. The trail system offers something of interest for a wide variety of cyclists with different skill levels. The trails feature a hard-packed surface with moderate climbs, and a good number of log and ramped-log hops. Trails are often crowded on the weekends, with fewer users during week days.

Lt. Brown believes there has been 85-95% success with the design of the trail system. However, he noted that erosion has occurred on slopes where trail sections were not well designed. Trail segments in open fields are generally the worst for retaining water after heavy rains. Trail segments in forested, upland areas generally have fewer drainage problems. Lt. Brown advised that the sustainability of any natural surface trail system is largely dependent on a good, well-thought-out initial trail design and layout coupled with regular and routine follow-up maintenance.

Lt. Brown noted that the biggest problem with the trails at Schaeffer Farm have occurred when cyclists use trails when conditions are too wet. To address this problem, DNR has implemented a mandatory trail closure period from December 15 through March 15. If there is an extended hard freeze, the trails may be open during the winter on a day-to-day basis. There is no trail riding for 24 hours after a soaking rain. Cyclists are encouraged to not use the trails when they are wet and muddy. All gate closures must be observed. DNR has set up a 24 hour hot-line to provide trail closure information. A few years ago, "renegade" cyclists created additional trails through adjacent forest without the approval of park staff. MORE successfully argued to add these trails to the official network but also agreed to help educate trail users regarding acceptable vs. unacceptable behavior. To MORE's credit, the problem has not re-occurred. MORE continues to lobby for more trails with the caveat that some be opened on an interim basis thus allowing time to evaluate success. Due to budget cuts and coincident reductions in staff, Lt. Brown is relying more and more on volunteers -- especially from MORE, Boy Scouts, etc. -- for trail maintenance.

**c. What is the current experience elsewhere in our park system in terms of shared use trails?**

Little Bennett Regional Park has an extensive network of natural surface trails designed and implemented by park staff in the mid 1980s. Roughly one half of the park's trails are designed as *Hiker Only* with the remainder designated as *Shared-Use All*. The shared use trails are used heavily by equestrians and less so by mountain bike enthusiasts. Staff's analysis of natural surface trails in Little Bennett Regional Park has shown that trails designated *Shared -Use All* cause more environmental impacts and require more maintenance than trails designated *Hiking Only*. This conclusion largely mirrors staff's observation regarding shared use trails elsewhere in the County park system.

Little Bennett's *Shared-use All* natural surface trails:

- Are subject to greater disruption of the normal soil profile and therefore experience more erosion.
- Are subject to significant soil compaction and associated negative impacts to the roots of adjacent trees and shrubs.
- Cause a higher level of trail-side tree mortality.
- When located on slopes, are more likely to evolve into well-defined, incised channels that regularly convey erosive storm-flows during major storm events.
- Are more likely to widen and even split into multiple trail segments over time as trail users try to avoid water saturated soils, erosion channels, wash-outs, and fallen trees.
- Are more likely to become water saturated, muddy quagmires when used in rainy weather.
- Are in some locations, unsuitable for use by hikers.
- Require more substantial engineered structures (e.g., boardwalk, bridges) to cross streams, nontidal wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Regularly require more frequent and intensive maintenance.



As previously noted, the natural surface trail system in Little Bennett Regional Park was designed and built approximately 20 years ago. Staff's knowledge of trail design and construction has improved over the intervening years. The Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning is committed to the design and construction of sustainable natural surface trails, capable of supporting the intended range of uses. Staff's commitment in this regard should help to ensure that newer trails result in less environmental impact, require less maintenance, and provide a more satisfactory experience for the trail user.

### **3) Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks.**

The Park Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, *i.e.*, PROS, (M-NCPPC, 1998) defines Conservation Parks on pages 24-25 as generally large areas that preserve specific natural, archaeological, or historical features; are typically located in upland areas (but also include stream valleys); and are acquired specifically for environmental preservation purposes. Conservation parks may include outstanding examples of natural communities, self-sustaining populations of rare, threatened, endangered or Watch-list plant or animal species, or unique archaeological and historical resources. Given the sensitive nature of resources in Conservation Parks, development is very limited and generally restricted to passive recreational activities such as hiking on natural surface trails, fishing, informal picnicking, and nature study. Opportunities for interpretation of the protected environmental, archaeological, and historical resources are maximized through natural-surface trails and staff and/or volunteer led programs.

Staff interprets PROS policy to mean that natural surface trails are a permitted recreational improvement in Conservation Parks. Staff's recommendations regarding permitted uses on natural surface trails require balancing a complex set of issues involving trail planning objectives, environmental impact assessment, responsibilities for resource stewardship, recreational needs, accessibility issues, monitoring, maintenance, and public safety. Ultimately, staff balance the public's right to use public parkland for recreation with M-NCPPC's responsibility to manage the land (and its natural, archaeological, and historical resources) in a manner that ensures those resources will be available for future generations.

There are currently 16 Conservation Parks totaling 3,316 acres in the County's 32,164-acre park system. The largest Conservation Park is Hoyle's Mill Conservation Park (766 acres) whereas the smallest is Goshen Elm Conservation Park (about three tenths of an acre). Conservation Parks include five of the park system's 12 best natural areas; these are Hoyle's Mill Conservation Park, Potomac Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park, River Road Shale Barrens Conservation Park, Rachel Carson Conservation Park, and Blockhouse Point Conservation Park. The other best natural areas are located in stream valley and regional parks.

The Planning Board approved the Countywide Park Trails Plan in July 1998. The plan (M-NCPPC, 1998) recommends natural surface trail corridors through Rachel Carson Conservation Park and Blockhouse Point Conservation Park. The Planning Board

reaffirmed its 1998 decision regarding Blockhouse Point within the context of the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan in January 2002.

The Planning Board approved the Rachel Carson Conservation Park Master Plan in June 2000. The plan (M-NCPPEC, 2000) included natural surface trails designated as *Hiker Only* and *Shared-Use Hiker Equestrian Only*.

The Planning Board approved the public access element (*i.e.*, trail plan) of the Bucklodge Forest Conservation Park Management Plan in June 2002. The management plan (M-NCPPEC, 2002) included natural surface trails designated as *Hiker Only* and *Shared-Use All*.

**Topic 3: Staff responses to Public Hearing Testimony.**

Staff responses to Public Hearing Testimony are given in **Table 2**.

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 Lacoss)	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	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

SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
Jim Fary	<p>Check definitions in PROS for Conservation Park</p> <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>surface trail can be minimized.</p> <p>See discussion in packet under Topic 2: Trail policy issues in Conservation Parks</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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> </li>   <li>• Says no public interest in local interpretation of civil war sites.</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 <u>Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park Trail Plan</u> (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 <u>Master Plan for Blockhouse Point Master Park</u> 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> <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</li> </ul>

SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
		<p>Confederate invasion of Maryland in September 1862 by wading across the Potomac River at White's Ford.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> <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">www.civilwartrails</a> for more information.</p> <p>None of the sites mentioned by Mr. Scull are overgrown with weeds. Fort Stevens Cemetery on 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Gaithersburg State Park at the southernmost pass, stands the remarkable and oft visited Monument to Civil War Correspondents.</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 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>
Barbara Solimer-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>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>
West Montgomery County Citizens Association (Ginny Barnes)	<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 –</p>	<p>See staff response to Sustainable Montgomery (R.G. Steinman) Staff disagrees. See discussion in packet.</p>

SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
	<p>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>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>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> <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>
Potomac Bridle and Hiking Trail Association (Elaine Jones)	<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>The public is welcome to access the overlooks on foot as permitted in the <u>Trail Plan for Blockhouse Point Conservation Park (M-NCPPC, 1989)</u> and recommended in the current Trail Concept Plan.</p> <p>Agree- <u>all</u> natural surface trails should be sustainable.</p>
MidAtlantic Off Road Enthusiasts – MORE (Dave Magill)	<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>Staff believes the current Trail Concept Plan for <u>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>
Ronald Alt - MORE	<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>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>
Patricia Bunn - MORE	<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>

SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
James Freemont	<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>Does not want a visitor center – will encourage more visitation.</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 can not generally maintain a continued presence in each and every park.</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>
Austin Steo - MORE	<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 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>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 <i>Shared-Use All</i> natural surface trail in the Muddy Branch Stream Valley between MD Route 28 and the C&amp;O Canal National Historical Park.</p>
Delores Milmoie – 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 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>

SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
	Staff needs to document problems w/ shared use trails at Shaeffer Farm and elsewhere.	See packet discussion under Topic 2: Management and use of natural surface trails.
Charles Pritchard	<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>See Topic 1: Element 1 in packet.</p> <p>Staff agrees that in general shared use trails require more maintenance than those designated <i>Hiker Only</i> 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>
North Potomac Citizens Assoc. (Sandy Liu)	<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>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.</p> <p>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 discussion regard Schaeffer Farm under Topic 2: Management and use of natural surface trails in the packet.</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>
Mark Barson		



SPEAKER	SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	STAFF RESPONSE
<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>