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## Schools commit to plant more trees

Frederick County Public Schools joins 10-year initiative to add 20 percent more trees

by Margarita Raycheva | Staff Writer

Frederick County school grounds will become leafier during the next decade, as students, teachers and a local nature preservation agency will work together to almost double the amount of trees on school property.

Bigger trees will be planted around parking lots and in front of schools to provide shade and slow down stormwater runoff. Younger saplings may be tucked away in existing forested areas, where they can serve wildlife habitats and educational areas. Other smaller trees and shrubs will grow on what are now grassy slopes and help the school system reduce ground maintenance and mowing costs.

The plans come out of a recent Frederick County Board of Education decision, which has turned Frederick County Public Schools into an example for environmental leadership for other school systems.

"FCPS is the first school system to adopt a tree canopy goal within the Chesapeake Bay watershed," said Heather Montgomery, a conservation associate at the Potomac Conservancy.

At a meeting April 23, the Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt a goal for its tree canopy - the amount of land covered by tree branches and leaves - and expand tree-covered lands on school system property from 12 to 20 percent.

Board members agreed to support the 10-year initiative, saying it would improve air and water quality, preserve wildlife and create opportunities for hands-on learning for students. In addition, it can help cultivate a sense of environmental responsibility in students, said board member Kathryn B. Groth.

"It is important for students to see these efforts on their school grounds," Groth said. "These are youngsters who are going to be out there in the world ... They need to know this is important."

As part of the Chesapeake Bay agreement, the six states surrounding the bay have started working with local jurisdictions to adopt tree canopy cover goals, increase land tree coverage, and use it as a water filtration tool to protect the watershed.

No other school system near the Bay has yet joined these efforts in an informed and organized way. "It was very exciting to see that," Campbell said. "It will help with a variety of local, regional and even global environmental issues."

Frederick County Public Schools will work in partnership with the Potomac Conservancy. The group has already helped plant more than 500 trees at eight Frederick County schools.

The Conservancy is now working with the school system's Facilities Services Division, Schoolyard Habitat Program and local partners on an implementation plan.

The Potomac Conservancy receives funds from Chesapeake Bay Trust, The Home Depot Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service and hopes for an annual \$44,000 Urban Greening grant from the Chesapeake Trust.

### More than shade

- 80 percent of a person's exposure to radiation occurs before the age of 18.
- Children spend 25 percent of their school day outdoors, typically during peak hours of UVR exposure.
- Attention Deficit Disorder symptoms in children are relieved after spending time in nature.
- The presence of nature tends to bolster children's resilience against stress or adversity.
- Trees remove dust and soot from the air preventing lung damage and asthma in children.

Sources: Toronto District School Board; 2001 study by Andrea Faber Taylor, Frances E. Kuo and William C. Sullivan; Cornell University's Nancy Wells and Gary Evans; Home Depot Foundation; U.S. Forest Service