

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT

Groundbreaking “green streets” rules released by Montgomery County

Today Montgomery County released draft regulations that would be the first in the country to mandate use of “green streets” techniques to reduce roadway runoff on all new and reconstructed roads. The green streets approach uses specially-designed planting areas to capture and treat polluted rainwater that runs off our roadways. Green streets techniques have long been used on a demonstration basis, but Montgomery would be the first to require that they be used in all roadway projects. The draft regulations are open for public comment until the end of September.

Potomac Conservancy, on behalf of the Montgomery Stormwater Partners, has been working with Montgomery County for the past year and a half to ensure the county's road building practices have less of an impact on local waterways.

“Green streets do a much better job of protecting our rivers and streams than traditional stormwater management,” said Anne Merwin, Senior Director of Policy for Potomac Conservancy. “They significantly reduce hot, dirty, and fast runoff, in addition to making our streetscapes greener.”

Roadways are one of the largest sources of runoff in the county. When rainwater hits streets, it runs off into rivers and streams, carrying a load of sediment, pollution, oils, and trash. Green streets techniques prevent this pollution problem by capturing and slowing the flow of stormwater off the roads, and infiltrate it down into the ground or filter it to slow and clean its discharge.

If approved, the new regulations will require capture and treatment of a minimum amount of stormwater within the road right-of-way using green streets techniques. “Although we think the minimum capture requirements should have been much higher,” said Diane Cameron of Audubon Naturalist Society, “making green streets standard practice instead of a rare exception is a great step forward for the County.”

The green streets rules come as part of a larger group of “road code” regulations. The entire road code package is the result of a nearly year-long stakeholder process, originally called for by a coalition of pedestrian, bicycle, and stormwater advocates. While draft regulations on several issues including pedestrian safety, speed, and lane widths left community advocates unhappy, the green streets provisions are a victory for water quality in Montgomery County.

All of the draft Road Code regulations, including the Green Streets provisions, are available in the September 1, 2008 issue of the Montgomery County Register (available online at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/Content/EXEC/Register/Main.asp>). Citizens may submit written comments to the address provided in the register notice.

For additional information about the Green Streets and the Montgomery County Road Code, contact Anne Merwin (details above) or visit www.potomac.org.

About Potomac Conservancy

Since 1993, Potomac Conservancy has protected the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries. Its conservation programs address the goals of improving water quality, protecting the river’s scenic integrity, enhancing recreational resources, and building an informed and engaged constituency, using a range of tools, including restoration, permanent protection, advocacy, and citizen education and engagement.

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