

Calvert County Forest Conservation Fund

General Plan

Background

An individual making application for a subdivision, site plan, project plan, grading or vegetation removal permit, or sediment control approval on areas 40,000 square feet or greater is subject to forest conservation requirements mandated by the Maryland Forest Conservation Act. When the County implements its forest conservation requirements the primary objective is retaining existing forest on the site. After techniques for retaining existing forest on-site have been exhausted, there is a sequence in which prioritized mitigation techniques are prescribed which is described in the Zoning Ordinance. Included in this sequence is on-site afforestation or reforestation, off-site afforestation or reforestation, or the purchase of Forest Conservation Transferable Development Rights. Last in this sequence is payment of a fee-in-lieu into the Forest Conservation Fund. However, if the mitigation required is less than 5,000 square feet than fees-in-lieu may be used as the sole mitigation method. A mitigation sequence other than the one described in the Zoning Ordinance can only be used if necessary to achieve objectives of the County Comprehensive Plan or County land use policies, to take advantage of opportunities to consolidate forest conservation efforts, or if it can be supported that a technique at a lower priority level will be as effective as use of a higher priority level technique. The amount of mitigation required is determined by afforestation and conservation thresholds designated for each zoning district. It should be noted that the Forest Conservation Act does not apply to areas within 1,000 feet of tidal waters known as the Critical Area, which has separate conservation and mitigation requirements.

Forest Conservation and the Comprehensive Plan

The following are excerpts from the Calvert County Comprehensive Plan, Calvert 2040, which detail strategies and actions in support of forest conservation goals. These are used to help guide afforestation, reforestation, and conservation efforts in the County.

- Restore or create wetlands and wetland buffers in areas that will reduce nutrient pollution runoff from farms and developed areas.
- Preserve and restore riparian forests.
- Establish greenway systems along stream valleys especially where they connect large tracts of protected agricultural and forest lands.
- Retain 90% of existing forest as of 2010.
- Require replacement of 100% of forest loss since 2010 outside the Critical Area and Town Centers.
- Expand land preservation programs that protect forested areas (e.g. local land trusts, county land trusts, easement programs, Forest Stewardship Program, and Department of Defense programs for the Joint Land Use Area).

Forest Conservation Fund Strategies

Fee-in-lieu funds collected by the County can be used to help meet forest conservation goals with one or more of the strategies listed below.

- The acquisition of forested property which would then be placed under a conservation easement.*
- The acquisition of property which could be used as a mitigation bank for afforestation*
- Afforestation and reforestation on properties overseen by Calvert County Parks & Recreation and other suitable properties managed by County agencies as opportunities arise
- The County can offer an application for property owners outside of the Critical Area for trees to be supplied and planted (the county offers this application for properties within the Critical Area using Critical Area fees-in-lieu)
- The County can work with property owners, homeowner associations, and developers to supply and plant trees within designated open space
- The County can offer a coupon allowing for the purchase of qualifying trees at a discount from local nurseries
- The County can use the fund to help meet urban tree canopy goals including street tree plantings
- The County can use the fund for remediation and maintenance of existing forests and trees planted by the County

Afforestation, reforestation, and conservation efforts should prioritize stream and wetland buffer areas and other areas with potentially significant impacts to water quality, connections between and additions to forested areas, large blocks of contiguous forest, critical habitat areas, topographically unstable areas, and land use and road buffers.

Any strategies pursued using the Forest Conservation Fund should be made with the goal that, at a minimum, the equivalent number of acres for which money has been collected and paid into the Forest Conservation Fund is mitigated in accordance with afforestation, reforestation, and conservation priorities.

*with concurrence on a case by case basis with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Accounting Procedures

The following are the accounting procedures for the Forest Conservation Fund:

- Mitigation required (number of acres)
- In-lieu fees collected (dollars)
- Mitigation completed
 - Acres reforested
 - Acres afforested
 - Acres conserved
 - Total acres reforested, afforested, or conserved
- In-lieu fees expended (dollars)

Public Accessibility

This general plan with accounting procedures will be made available to the public via the County's forest conservation webpage found here <https://www.co.cal.md.us/551/Forest-Conservation>.