



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Prince George's County Planning Department
Countywide Planning Division
Environmental Planning Section

(301) 952-3650

www.mncppc.org

GUIDANCE FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PROPERTY OWNERS Preservation of Woodland Conservation Areas

August, 2010

RE: Preservation of Woodland Conservation Areas

The purpose of this document is to provide you with information regarding activities allowed within Woodland Conservation Areas on your property. During the plan approval stage for your home, the builder committed to providing Woodland Conservation Areas on your property in order to meet the requirements of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance, passed in 1989. The purpose of this ordinance is to minimize the loss and modification of woodlands during and following the land development process in accordance with the State of Maryland Forest Conservation Act.

Woodlands provide a variety of benefits to individual properties and the county as a whole. For you, the woodlands provide an increase in your property value. Studies have shown that wooded areas add \$5,000 to \$10,000 to the value of a property. The added value is higher where wooded areas are adjacent to other protected areas of woodlands. In many cases the woodlands also provide privacy and screening from other properties. The woodland may also serve to reduce your heating and cooling bills by shading your home and/or blocking the wind.

Woodlands benefit the county as a whole by increasing property values countywide, providing more livable communities, and by providing habitat for wildlife. The woodlands on your land contribute to the overall countywide benefits and as such are required to be preserved for your benefit and for the long-term benefits provided to the larger community.

Generally, a property is subject to the requirements of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance if it was subdivided after 1989 or if the property was greater than 40,000 square feet and had more than 10,000 square feet of existing woodland when it was subdivided or if it meets these parameters today. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is responsible for the review of land development proposals for conformance with the Woodland Conservation Ordinance. The Department of Public Works and Transportation is responsible for enforcement measures associated with the ordinance.

What you can do in a Woodland Conservation Area?

To find out if you have a Woodland Conservation Area on your property, you can contact the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) if the development is still under construction, or you can contact the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Planning Department's Environmental Planning Section (see contact list below). Approved Woodland Conservation Areas are shown on Type II Tree Conservation Plans and may include preservation areas, reforestation areas and/or afforestation areas.

The types of activities **allowed** in Woodland Conservation Areas include:

1. Removal of hazardous trees (see definitions) **is allowed** without written authorization from the M-NCPPC Environmental Planning Section or the DPW&T. See below for the required documentation.

2. Removal of exotic and invasive vegetation **is allowed** without written authorization. See the list of exotic and invasive vegetation provided and the required documentation.
3. Passive activities such as herb gardens, sitting areas, and wildflower gardens **are permitted** within the limits of a Woodland Conservation Area only if understory vegetation is not removed.
4. Removal of severed trunks, branches and debris as a result of storm damage.
5. Removal of dead branches and the general clean-up of dead debris **is allowed**.
6. Removal of trash and other human-made debris.

The types of activities that are **not allowed** in Woodland Conservation Areas include:

1. Removal of vegetation other than that noted above is **not** allowed. All of the other plants in the woodlands shall remain undisturbed, in perpetuity.
2. The removal of stumps, leaf litter, and/or removal of other plants in the understory are **not** allowed activities.
3. Seeding Woodland Conservation Areas with grass seed is **not** an allowed activity.
4. Sheds, garages, large fountains, and other permanent or semi-permanent structures are **not** allowed within the limits of a designated Woodland Conservation Area.
5. Activities that adversely impact the health, structure or integrity of a designated Woodland Conservation Area including but not limited to active recreational activities requiring the placement of playground equipment, paving for basketball or tennis courts, swimming pools, etc. are **not** allowed.

Documentation required for allowed activities

If you intend to conduct any of the activities listed as allowed in a Woodland Conservation Area, supporting documentation for the proposed activity must be prepared.

1. Pictures that clearly demonstrate the conditions that lead to the determination that the tree(s) are hazardous, and that show the location of the trees with respect to potential targets.
2. For hazardous trees, where pictures do not clearly demonstrate the hazardous condition, a brief report or statement prepared by a Maryland Licensed Tree Expert and/or a Certified Arborist, signed and dated, that identifies the location of the hazardous tree(s), species, size, condition, recommended corrective action and basis for that recommendation for each hazardous tree identified must be obtained.
3. Before and after pictures of the exotic and invasive vegetation that reflect the area in detail and clearly show the species present are required. If you are not certain how to identify exotic or invasive species, seek professional assistance.
4. If the property is located within the municipal limits of an incorporated town, if there is a Homeowners Association, or if there are covenants on the property that prohibit the cutting of trees, permission from the appropriate organizations may be required before proceeding with any work.
5. After the above documentation has been prepared, a copy of the documentation should be sent to the M-NCPPC Environmental Planning Section for inclusion in the official Woodland Conservation files. If there is any active building or grading permit for the property, it is the property owner's responsibility to coordinate any tree or vegetation removal with the Department of Environmental Resources site development inspector (see below for contact information).

How to conduct allowed activities

1. When trimming is to be done to correct a hazardous condition, the trimming shall be done by a Licensed Tree Expert who may be found in the local phone directory or at <http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/forests/oflists/lte/treexpert.html>

2. Tree removals shall be done by cutting the tree at ground level (within 3 inches of existing grade) with hand-held equipment and leaving the stump in place. Stump grinding or stump removal is **not** permitted.
3. The surrounding vegetation should **not** be disturbed or removed unless that vegetation is an exotic and invasive species as listed in this notice.
4. All tree and vegetation removal shall be done with hand-held equipment **not** wheeled or tracked equipment that is indiscriminant with respect to individual plants. The work shall be done in accordance with ANSI A-300 standards for trimming and pruning woody vegetation.

DEFINITIONS

Exotic and Invasive Vegetation: Plant species that are not native to the region in which they are located and can displace native species thus changing the structure and composition of native plant communities.

Forest or Woodland: A perpetual biological community dominated by trees and other woody plants covering a land area of 10,000 square feet or greater. This includes areas that have at least 100 trees per acre with at least 50 trees that are two inches or greater in caliper. This also includes areas where timber harvesting has taken place, but where the stumps remain in place for future generations.

Hazardous Tree: A hazardous condition is present only when a tree has an existing condition which would lead a knowledgeable person trained in the field of arboriculture to believe that the specific condition could result in the tree or a portion of the tree falling and striking a structure or activity area (target), thus, threatening property damage and/or injury.

Tree: A plant with a woody stem capable of attaining a height of at least 20 feet at maturity.

Understory: Plants growing in association with trees in a woodland. The understory includes the biological community of plants that include trees, shrubs and forbs that grow under the shaded canopy of larger trees and is a vital component of a perpetual woodland.

Woody Vegetation: Plants with persistent stems lasting more than one year and increasing in diameter annually.

Woodland Conservation Area: An area of existing woodland, reforestation or afforestation that has been specifically identified for protection or restoration on an approved Tree Conservation Plan in order to satisfy the requirements of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance.

LIST OF EXOTIC AND INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Some of the more common exotic and invasive species that may be controlled and/or removed are noted below. A more comprehensive list of exotic and invasive species may be found at the following web sites: www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/ieplists.asp and www.mdflora.org/publications/invasives.htm

Herbaceous

Garlic mustard
Common Reed
Phragmites
Hogsweed

Tall fescue K31
Japanese knotweed
Mile-a-minute vine

Sericea lespedeza
Crown-vetch
Lesser celandine

Vines

Porcelain berry
 Climbing euonymus, wintercreeper
 English ivy

Oriental bittersweet
 Japanese honeysuckle
 Periwinkle

Cinnamon vine
 Kudzu
 Wisteria

Shrubs

Japanese barberry
 Winged euonymus
 Bamboo
 Multiflora rose
 Coralberry

Russian olive
 Privet
 Common buckthorn
 Wineberry
 Strawberry-raspberry, Balloonberry

Autumn olive
 Bush honeysuckles
 European buckthorn
 Japanese spiraea

Trees

Norway maple
 Empress Tree

Tree of heaven
 Sweet cherry

White mulberry

Native species that may be controlled within 75 feet of a woodland edge

Poison ivy

Greenbrier

Blackberry

OTHER BENEFICIAL WEB SITES

Geographic and property information for Prince George's County
 Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
 Department of Public Works and Transportation
www.goprincegeorgescounty.com/Government/AgencyIndex

www.pgatlas.com
www.mncppc.org/pgco/

CONTACT INFORMATION

If any questions arise with regard to permitted activities in a Woodland Conservation Area, please contact the Environmental Planning Section. Enforcement issues should be referred to the Department of Public Works and Transportation.

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