



**FRIENDS**  
OF  
**TEN MILE CREEK**  
&  
**LITTLE SENECA RESERVOIR**

Protecting a clean water source  
for the Washington D.C. region

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Dear Council President Friedson and County Councilmembers,

We would like to express our strong opposition to the proposed ZTA 23-09 which is being presented by Councilmember Fani-Gonzales. While the proposal purports to promote agritourism and economic development in the Agricultural Reserve we believe it will have a far more destructive and permanent adverse impact on the Agricultural Reserve itself. Moreover, part of the Ten Mile Creek watershed is in the Agricultural Reserve. It could easily be impacted by this proposal, as could Little Seneca Reservoir.

This proposal is not based on carefully considered economic and environmental analysis and evaluation of potential adverse impacts. It also lacks the previous involvement and support from the overall farming community in the County and it is mystifying as to why this proposal is so hastily and poorly presented for approval. "AgriTourism" is not agriculture and is not farming. It is tourism, a completely different industry, with totally different standards, legal requirements and regulations, both county, and state. The addition of "overnight stays" is contrary to the original vision and intent of the Agricultural Reserve. While it may be of benefit to a very small, select group of farmers, this drastic zoning change can also be a significant economic and environmental burden on the much larger farming community in the Agricultural Reserve, a community that is dependent on a limited water supply provided by the sole source aquifer.

**Advisory Committee**

Jim Choukas-Bradley

Mike Gravitz

Royce Hanson

Caroline Taylor

Tenley Wurglitz, *Past*

*President*

There is ample evidence and local history to document the fragility of the sole source aquifer in the Agricultural Reserve. Why is the sole source aquifer so important to farmers and residents in the Agricultural Reserve? Everyone in the Agricultural Reserve is dependent on this sole source aquifer because there are no sewers or public water facilities in the Agricultural Reserve. Farmers must rely on the aquifer to water their crops. Because of this, in the past, the Planning Board and County Council have been extremely sensitive to the vulnerability and potential impacts on the sole source aquifer. For example a golf course and several development plans were denied because of the potential impact on the water supply. They were all aware of the potential crisis of water shortage in the Agricultural Reserve that would be caused if the aquifer were to run low or dry up. They were also well aware of the potential crisis for streams like Ten Mile Creek. If the aquifer is threatened, they will be, too, since they are hydrologically connected to the aquifer. The County Department of Environmental Protection has placed Ten Mile Creek in a Special Protection Area. This potential crisis goes beyond the Agricultural Reserve: the Little Seneca Reservoir, fed by streams in the area, is the backup water supply for the DC metropolitan area.

The streams in most of the Ag Reserve are already sensitive to drought due to natural geological conditions and shallow soils. The sole source aquifer needs to be protected so that farmers can have enough water for crops, residents can have clean drinking water and effective plumbing facilities and streams can maintain adequate flow to support aquatic biodiversity.



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This ZTA can also bring additional human relations and regulatory requirements which can become a significant distraction and burden on those farmers who are often under time pressures brought on by weather conditions, planting and harvesting requirements, farm machine maintenance etc. Woe to the farmers who are working in their fields in 90o temperatures and get a call in their tractor from a tourist who complains about seeing a mouse in their "cabin" or not having enough tissue paper, etc. Each of these "cabins" in all of the farms that choose to participate will be required to have adequate water and sewer facilities that will need to be regulated by county permitting agencies. Sadly, the Agricultural Reserve does not have an acceptable record of permit compliance inspection by county agencies.

The justification for "Overnight Stays" in Agricultural Reserve to get closer to nature and rural environment is also highly questionable given the abundance of hotel and motel accommodations in nearby Germantown, Urbana, Frederick etc. Northern Montgomery County has also been blessed with an exceptional number of outstanding county, state and private parks open to the public ( Sugarloaf Mountain, Black Hills, Bucklodge Forest, Little Bennett, Seneca Creek State Park etc.) These parks will be in competition with this ZTA.

The visionaries who developed and implemented the Agricultural Reserve understood the need to protect the Ag Reserve by implementing zoning restrictions to prevent future alternative development and competing commercialization proposals. These restrictions are what have allowed the Reserve to survive and to be heralded throughout the country. Introducing this alternate zoning text amendment will surely bring future development proposals taking advantage of the Overnight Lodging Loophole and will seriously compromise the integrity and original intent of the Agricultural Reserve. This was not the understanding and agreement that many landowners agreed to when they sold their land for TDR'S. Please vote to disapprove of this ill conceived ZTA proposal.

We would like to express our strong opposition to the proposed ZTA 23-09 which is being presented by Councilmember Mrs Fani-Gonzàles. While the proposal purports to promote agritourism and economic development in the Agricultural Reserve we believe it will have a far more destructive and permanent adverse impact on the Agricultural Reserve itself. This proposal is not based on carefully considered economic and environmental analysis and evaluation of potential adverse impacts. It also lacks the previous involvement and support from the overall farming community in the County and it is mystifying as to why this proposal is so hastily and poorly presented for approval.

"AgriTourism" is not agriculture and is not farming. It is tourism, a completely different industry, with totally different standards, legal requirements and regulations, both county, and state. The addition of "overnight stays" is contrary to the original vision and intent of the Agricultural Reserve. While it may be of benefit to a very small, select group of farmers, this drastic zoning change can also be a significant economic and environmental burden on the much larger farming community in the Agricultural Reserve, a community that is dependent on a limited water supply provided by the sole source aquifer. There is ample evidence and local history to document the fragility of the sole source aquifer in the Agricultural Reserve.

Why is the sole source aquifer so important to farmers and residents in the Agricultural Reserve? Everyone in the Agricultural Reserve is dependent on this sole source aquifer because there are no sewers or public water facilities in the Agricultural Reserve. Because of this, in the past, the Planning Board and County Council have been extremely sensitive to the vulnerability of creeks and streams and the ultimate impact on the sole source aquifer. For example a golf course and several development plans were denied because of the potential impact on the water supply. They were all aware of the potential crisis of water shortage in the Agricultural Reserve that would



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The streams in most of the Ag Reserve are already sensitive to drought due to natural geological conditions and shallow soils. The sole source aquifer needs to be protected so that farmers can have enough water for crops, residents can have clean drinking water and effective plumbing facilities and streams can maintain adequate flow to support aquatic biodiversity.

This ZTA can also bring additional human relations and regulatory requirements which can become a significant distraction and burden on those farmers who are often under time pressures brought on by weather conditions, planting and harvesting requirements, farm machine maintenance etc. Woe to the farmers who are working in their fields in 90o temperatures and get a call in their tractor from a tourist who complains about seeing a mouse in their "cabin" or not having enough tissue paper, etc. Each of these "cabins" in all of the farms that choose to participate will be required to have adequate water and sewer facilities that will need to be regulated by county permitting agencies. Sadly, the Agricultural Reserve does not have an acceptable record of permit compliance inspection by county agencies.

The justification for "Overnight Stays" in Agricultural Reserve to get closer to nature and rural environment is also highly questionable given the abundance of hotel and motel accommodations in nearby Germantown, Urbana, Frederick etc. Northern Montgomery County has also been blessed with an exceptional number of outstanding county, state and private parks open to the public ( Sugarloaf Mountain, Black Hills, Bucklodge Forest, Little Bennett, Seneca Creek State Park etc.) These parks will be in competition with this ZTA.

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Sincerely,

Anne Cinque  
President, Friends of Ten Mile Creek