



LITTLE FALLS WATERSHED ALLIANCE

EDUCATION - ACTION - STEWARDSHIP

March 4, 2024

Montgomery County Budget Consideration

Support for Full Funding for Montgomery Parks

FY 25-30 CIP

This is to express our support for fully funding Montgomery Parks' FY 25-30 CIP request. Little Falls Watershed Alliance is an environmental stewardship group for the Little Falls Branch, the Willett Branch and the surrounding area. We are lucky to have many parks in our watershed; the two most prominent being the Capital Crescent Trail and the Little Falls Stream Valley Park with over four miles of trails. Founded in 2008, we are located in lower Montgomery County in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area. We have more than 5,000 members and work closely with the community on projects and issues affecting the natural areas in our neighborhood. We also work closely with Parks on many stewardship projects including hosting weed warrior events, trash pick-ups and habitat restoration. Last year, we hosted 106 events.

The County Executive's proposed CIP budget is \$24.4 million less than Parks has deemed necessary to support our extraordinary park system. The reduction proposed by the Executive especially impacts the residents of the Little Falls watershed. The trails in the Little Falls Stream Valley Park are in terrible shape. They are buckling, sinking, and crumbling. They flood frequently from lack of stormwater management, sometimes impassable for days. The park trails are an important part of our lives. Because we are located in a densely urban area, our park is well used by parents pushing strollers, children playing in the creek, dog walkers, joggers, bird watchers and a surprising number of elderly residents out for fresh air. After years of requesting resurfacing so we can safely navigate the trails and stormwater management to prevent the huge puddles, we have been told that we are finally on the list for this project. A cut in the CIP will certainly mean we have to wait again.

And it's not just our trail project that is in jeopardy, the Parks are loved to death all over the County. At least a dozen other trails restoration projects are in the planning stage. To reduce the budget means that these trail renovations could also be delayed or cut. Other projects like parking lots, traffic calming, and restrooms are also in jeopardy. A reduction in CIP means that Parks infrastructures will suffer - not only amenities like playgrounds and tennis courts, but projects like stream protection and pollution prevention that are key to our stewardship of the environment.

We cannot expect to continue to have a nationally recognized park system without the budget to maintain it. We cannot meet our obligation to the environment that the County celebrates every Earth Day without the budget to maintain our parks. And we cannot expect to reap the economic

benefits that the County realizes from a robust and healthy park system if the parks are allowed to fall into disrepair.

Montgomery County has long been a leader in environmental stewardship with one of the best park systems in the country. Help us maintain this standard of excellence and make sure that Montgomery Parks is fully funded. Restore the \$24.4 million.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Morse
Executive Director
Little Falls Watershed Alliance

Stormwater@LFWA.org
www.LFWA.org