



April 7, 2025

Testimony

To: Montgomery County Maryland Council

From: Friends of Sligo Creek

RE: FY 2026 Budget for the Department of Environmental Protection  
and the Water Quality Protection Charge

This is a time of supreme crisis. Federal support to fight climate change is evaporating. The risks are increasing. It's up to us – people, counties and states to step up. There are two clear ways to help the environment in Montgomery County: increase the WQPC – Water Quality Protection Charge and increase the DEP budget. We support the County Executive's proposed increases for the following reasons:

On the latter, there is important work to do that's not currently or at least sufficiently covered:

- 1) Maintenance of all the RainScapes projects is not sufficiently funded – staff to implement or resources to fund rebates.
- 2) The new laws prohibiting gas powered blowers and plastic bags need to be implemented to be effective.
- 3) Trees are being lost faster than they are being planted. Tree Montgomery is a good way to facilitate this with sufficient funding.
- 4) Salt management efforts, including SaltWise engagement with the commercial sector, engagement with other government agencies, and more investment in better equipment and systems will help reduce salt-poisoning of our environment.
- 5) Dredging older storm ponds and greening them to be more effective is overdue.

- 6) Improve enforcement collaboratively with groups like our Water WatchDog and partners will help reduce pollution from sewage and water line breaks.

The Water Quality Protection Charge has the advantage of being a somewhat progressive charge. It helps fund critical stormwater projects. Because Conservation Landscapes are now getting MS4 credit from the state, and they are so much easier for people to install, they offer a greatly increased opportunity to plant pollinator native plant gardens that also capture stormwater. DEP needs funds to be able to process these rebates for this easier, cheaper and yet effective project.

In the larger budget, the Shady Grove facility must be renovated. The incinerator should be shut and a composting facility installed at Dickerson. These are very critical and yet expensive projects.

Friends of Sligo Creek, or FOSC, is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.

Thank you for considering these issues.

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