



March 5, 2012

Honorable Jerry Walker
Councilman, District 7
P.O. Box 2700
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Mr. Walker:

The Advocates for Herring Bay urge you to vote against Bill 15-12, which would change the types of development allowed in areas zoned as "Open Space" (OS). This special zoning category is used to protect both natural areas and recreational properties, such as parks. Existing law strikes a careful balance between those two uses by permitting recreational activities that complement the preservation of natural habitats. Bill 15-12 would upend that balance by allowing high-impact recreational activities with permanent structures or other impervious surfaces covering up to 25 percent of the property.

The changes proposed in Bill 15-12 are tantamount to an upzoning of the 33,000 acres that have been zoned as Open Space in Anne Arundel County.¹ This zoning designation currently is used for land uses dominated by "natural features," including greenways and "passive parks, conservation lands, floodplains, and other environmental protection areas."² Putting structures or parking lots on 25 percent of the county's OS parcels could jeopardize the ecological integrity of thousands of acres designated for preservation, undermining commitments made by the county in the General Development Plan and in agreements governing specific properties. Adding impervious surfaces to areas that abut local waterways also would make it harder and more costly to reduce the sediment and pollution loads flowing into the Chesapeake Bay.

Because OS zoning is used for land preservation, this category is not appropriate for activities that involve impervious surfaces. We urge you to champion changes that will strengthen protections for natural areas, not those that would weaken them. Please vote against Bill 15-12.

Thank you for considering our views. If you have any questions about our concerns regarding this legislation, please contact Barbara Miller at herringbay@gmail.com.

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¹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources, <http://dnr.maryland.gov/greenways/counties/annearundel.html>.

² Anne Arundel County, 2009 General Development Plan, pages 20 and 116.

Letter to Honorable Jerry Walker
March 5, 2012
Page 2

Kim Jones
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James Muell
J. Richard Ronay
Eric Smith
Anne Stewart
Melinda Zimmerman

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Mark McCaig
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Scott Smith
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Stephen Marley
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Stephen Smith
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