



Testimony of the Advocates for Herring Bay on
Bill No. 64-09, codifying Anne Arundel County's General Development Plan (GDP)
August 17, 2009

The Advocates for Herring Bay support enactment of bill 64-09 because the legislation holds the promise of environmentally sound management of the ecological and historical resources in our watershed. What remains unfinished is the challenging task of making that promise a reality. We urge the council to adopt policies that will capitalize on the strengths of the GDP and correct certain deficiencies. Our five major concerns include the following:

1. Sub-watersheds designated as a priority for preservation must be protected. Most of Herring Bay's sub-watersheds contain relatively pristine ecological resources that warrant protection, which is why the GDP has classified them as a high priority for preservation. We recommend using the sub-watershed rankings in the GDP (see figures 10-5 and 10-6) to screen areas that generally should not be eligible for more intense development.

2. Historically and culturally significant areas should be preserved. Given Herring Bay's importance in the county's colonial and modern history, AHB strongly supports the policies outlined in Chapter 5 regarding new incentives and land-use tools to protect these assets.

3. The plan needs stronger procedural safeguards. One of the most important elements of the Small Area Planning process was having citizens who were familiar with local conditions review and make recommendations on all requests for zoning changes. We urge the council to establish a similar process for evaluating zoning changes proposed as part of the 2009 GDP.

4. The plan neglects to preserve natural shorelines. Ecologically important habitats will be lost if the county only strives to protect areas deemed to be of national or statewide significance. For example, the GDP fails to address the need to protect the county's remaining natural shorelines, which provide essential habitat for horseshoe crabs, terrapins, colonial nesting birds, and other species. We urge the county to establish a shoreline preservation program (like those for agricultural and forested areas) and adopt overlays or similar measures to protect these resources.

5. Extending sewer service to waterfront communities with undeveloped, antiquated lots will degrade watersheds and habitat even without a change in zoning. The GDP calls for replacing septic systems with sewer service under certain conditions (see page 221). Sewer service would trigger the development of hundreds of undeveloped, under-sized lots in waterfront communities that were platted decades ago, adding to the population and impervious surfaces in the Critical Area. Sewers should only be extended to areas without such development potential.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gramp

