

SPARKS-GLENCOE COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL BOARD 2010-2011

Goals

- ◆ Educating residents and land use representatives about the natural resources in northern Baltimore County;
- ◆ Encouraging the protection and preservation of the rural, historical, and agricultural environment of northern Baltimore County;
- ◆ Promoting responsible community planning which maintains the rural character of the area;
- ◆ Advocating growth in keeping with the level of public services available in the area.

Contact us at our website: www.sgcpc.org at info@sgcpc.org

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Fall 2010 Newsletter



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More By The Minute!

SGCPC Community Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at Sparks School Belfast Road at 7:00 pm Please join us!

SPARKS-GLENCOE COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL
P.O. Box 937
Sparks, MD 21152

Dear Neighbor,

This newsletter brings you not only the stories you're used to hearing from us, but stories we're hearing from you. Our August meeting had no agenda but what was on our neighbors' minds, and we did our best to address your questions. Our lead article is dedicated to that meeting and we hope you find it helpful and informative.

Our focus this newsletter is on farming and water. With the opening of the new Agricultural Center in Hunt Valley, we decided to interview one of our local farming families. And the pressing issue of water consumption and contamination is on everyone's mind these days.

The fall is a time of renewal, not only for the land and the water but for our membership. We hope you find the time in your schedules to attend one of our meetings. Without your support, the work we do would not be possible.

The SGCPC Board



Audubon Has Identified An "Important Bird Area" In Our Midst!

SGCPC's **November 10th speaker**, David Curson, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon MD-DC, will discuss how an "Important Bird Area" is identified and how this information is utilized in land use planning.



Open Meeting in August Stirs Local Interest

To better serve the community and find out what's on our neighbors' minds, SGCPC held an open agenda meeting in August. The meeting was well-attended and residents raised varying and note-worthy questions. Since then, SGCPC has been busy trying to come up with answers. Here is some of what was asked and what we were able to do.

Why are the telephone poles along several north County roads being jacked up another ten feet? A representative from BGE advised us that the telephone poles are being raised to provide more clearance for large trucks on the roads. BGE has had a number of problems with trucks taking down wires.

What can be done to make our roads more user-friendly to cyclists? Our research revealed that the Baltimore County Office of Planning is phasing in a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle plan for the entire county. Phase one will cover the eastern County, phase two the western County, and phase three the rural County. For detailed information you can visit their website at: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/planning/community.

A gas station, located on York Road in Parkton, has been converted to a package goods store and tavern. The liquor license was transferred from the old Parkton Inn to the new location. Several neighbors complained about lack of adequate notice that this was occurring. Notice of the liquor board hearing appeared in the Jeffersonian, which most residents don't receive, and was posted on the property at the time of the huge snow storm last winter and not visible from the road. The area was chained and "no trespassing" signs were posted. What can be done? *(continued page 2)*

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Open Meeting *(continued from page 1)*

The issue of adequate notice is a real one. The neighbors were advised that they might appeal for a second hearing.

Summertime tubers lugging cases of beer down the Gunpowder Falls and illegal parking on private property near the NCR Trail in Monkton had local landowners up in arms. At a meeting earlier in the summer with the Baltimore County Police, the State Highway Administration, the Natural Resources Police and the Park Service, the neighbors were told that because of manpower shortages and overlapping jurisdictional issues, enforcement was a problem. SGPCPC wrote a letter to the Baltimore County Chief of Police with a copy to the precinct Captain and Bryan McIntire requesting an increase in police presence for the rest of the summer and ticketing for all illegally parked cars. Baltimore County Police have stepped up their patrol while NRP has since stepped up enforcement in nearby park lands. We are continuing our efforts to bring all relevant parties together to resolve these issues.

Because of its popularity, another open agenda meeting will most likely be held next year by SGPCPC.

This Property is in Preservation

Many of you have asked why trees are being removed from the land at the corner of Ensor Mill Road and York Road behind the former Glencoe Gardens store. The 97 acre parcel, most of which is already in agricultural preservation, was recently purchased by Chuck and Mary Ann Ensor. Mr. Ensor, a principle of Cold Bottom Farms, Inc., based in Sparks, has removed some trees to farm 80 acres of tillable land. There was a single development right included in the purchase in addition to the Glencoe Gardens building. The existing retail structure fronting York Road and 2.6 acres was subdivided and sold to Barbara and Anthony Zipp who plan to operate a store selling and auctioning antique American stoneware and redware. Other retail tenants at the site are scheduled to remain.

If you are interested in putting your property in preservation, please contact DEPRM's Wally Lippincott at wlippincott@co.ba.md.us or call Ann Jones at 410-461-6917.

Calvert's Gift Farm: A Good Thing in A Small Package

Jack Gurley, a former fisheries biologist, and his wife, Becky, are raising two teenage daughters and now making a living as organic farmers on four rented acres across the street from their brick home on Yeoho Road in Sparks. "I used to say, we need more organic farmers," said Gurley who's spearheading an effort called the New Farmer Trainee Program. "Now, I just say we need more farmers. Becky and I feel as if we can contribute to the greater good by promoting more small farms like us to grow produce for our local area. That's the only way the local food movement can sustain itself in the future."

The couple's farming practices involve extensive multi-year crop rotations, cover crops, compost, reduced tillage



Jack Gurley explaining to SGPCPC President Kirsten Burger how he grows mushrooms in logs.

techniques, crop timing, and low-tech inputs. Their crops range from shitake mushrooms and poetically named heirloom veggies (ie: Eva's purple ball, Fairy Tale, Rus-

sian persimmon, and Snowy) to old standbys such as cauliflower, broccoli and lettuce. "We don't ever not have lettuce," Gurley said. Mesclun salad mix is their signature product, offered not only to CSA customers but also available at four farmers' markets where Becky is a regular.

To control the thistle, he plants rye (the grain, not the grass) because of its alleopathic effect – its biochemical interactions inhibit the growth of neighboring plants. "We live in a society that thinks bigger, faster, quicker is best, that believes the nature of business is to continually grow," Gurley said. "I have issues with that belief. Expanding doesn't interest us. Our farm hasn't changed in size, and we remain profitable. We live a solid middle-class lifestyle. It can be done."

For more information, check out Calvert's Gift Farm website: <http://www.calvertsgiftfarm.com/index.html>.

We thank Maryalice Yakutchik for her contributions to this article.

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New Agricultural Center Opens

Several hundred people attended the opening ceremony of the new Baltimore County Center for Maryland Agriculture that was hosted by County Executive Jim Smith on September 22. The 149 acre site at 1114 Shawan Road is architecturally designed to look and feel like a farm and will lend itself to future field and livestock operations. The Center was conceived by a core group of citizens partnering with the County government and designed to consolidate the State's many support and educational agricultural services at a central location. It is dedicated to the sustainability of agriculture in Maryland. Jim Smith said the Center is one of his most satisfying accomplishments. Chris McCollum will serve as the Center's Executive Director.

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Basic membership: ___ (\$35) **Family** (2 adults in the same household): ___ (\$50)

I wish to make an additional donation of: ___ \$50 ___ \$100 ___ \$200 ___ Other

Please make check out to SGPCPC and mail to: P.O. Box 937, Sparks, MD 21152

If you'd like to get more involved with our work, choose a committee that interests you: ___ zoning; ___ land preservation; ___ membership & fundraising; ___ communications; ___ web site; ___ monitoring county hearings, or let us know how you can help: _____

Name _____

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Thank you for your support!

Did you know that...

Nearly 70 percent of the world's fresh water is locked in ice, and most of the rest is in aquifers that we're draining much more quickly than the natural recharge rate? Or that 70 percent of our water is used to grow food? It takes 1,857 gallons of water to produce one pound of ground beef and 379 gallons to produce one pound of figs. With the world's population increasing by 83 million people each year, demand for water will eventually outstrip supply unless we change how we use it.

As many of us do the best we can to manage our water supply with low flow water fixtures, rain barrels and rain gardens, broad spectrum commitment to managing water supply across the country is beginning to take hold. The City of Albuquerque revised its water-use codes when it found out its aquifer was much smaller than it realized. It paid homeowners to take classes on reducing outdoor watering, offered rebates to anyone who installed low flow fixtures or drip irrigation or removed a lawn. The city's domestic per capital water use shrunk from 140 gallons per day to about 80.

Industry is also adjusting to less certain water supplies: Coca Cola removes dust and carton lint from its containers using air instead of water and Google recycles its own water to cool its giant data centers. But perhaps most significantly, agribusiness is becoming interested in how sustainability can work from the megafarm to the megastore. Through a system called "sustainability metrics," farmers are not only calculating the least amount of fertilizer, pesticide and pH they need to bring to the soil, they are starting to measure wind speed, direction, evaporation rates and soil moisture to determine how many hours they should irrigate and at what rate.

Information for this article comes from the National Geographic and NRDC's On Earth magazine.



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Parsonage Road Development Threatens Water Quality

SGCPC, the Freeland Community Association, and the Prettyboy Watershed Preservation Society have challenged a development of eight houses in the Prettyboy Reservoir Watershed. The property proposed for development has steep slopes, mostly wooded, with a tributary of Frog Hollow running at the bottom on its way to the Reservoir. The development plan calls for cutting down woods, putting in a road, extensive regrading, and building houses. Sedimentation and stormwater carrying road salt and other pollutants would wash down the slopes, into the stream — a brook trout habitat — and into the Reservoir.

The Prettyboy Reservoir, already polluted, is the subject of a multi-pronged restoration project, a cooperative effort by the State of Maryland, Baltimore and Carroll Counties, Baltimore City, the Reservoir Technical Group of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, Soil Conservation Districts from two counties, and several citizen groups. Allowing the Parsonage Road development to move forward as proposed would denigrate the restoration project and lead to a decline in the Reservoir's water quality, discounting the needs of the millions of people who rely on the public water supply.

In addition to the environmental dangers posed by the development, it would also add population to school districts where the schools are already over-capacity.

We participated in the zoning hearing and asked the County to reduce the number of houses in the proposed Parsonage Road development, to reduce the width of the driveway and move the entrance to a location with a gentler grade to minimize regrading and use of fill dirt, and to keep the road under private ownership to reduce expenses for the county, including maintenance, and trash and snow removal.

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