



Mark Fennel (R), Montgomery County Council At-Large Candidate

Environmental Views

1. Do you believe that the county is in a position to meet the challenges that growth has placed on our natural resources and neighborhoods?

No

2. Given that the pressures on Metro's Red Line have become severe in recent years, with the growth in Montgomery County's residential sector creating big increases in Metro ridership, which of the following policies will you actively support and promote:

Adopting policies to encourage jobs growth rather than housing growth in Montgomery, so that more riders on the Red Line will come north for jobs in the morning, and travel back south to the District or Prince George's County in the evening (the available capacity on the Red Line is in these directions and times).

3. What is your perspective regarding citizen activists in the county and their role in governance? Check all answers that apply.

I wish that county residents had more trust in their elected officials.

We tend to see the "regulars" at hearings and meetings and it would be good to see more new faces.

They are the backbone of the County.

I rely on them.

I would like to see more of them.

I am one of those people.

4. How would you rate the performance of the current Council over the past four years? If you are an incumbent, give your most candid assessment and supply comments to suggest ways the Council could improve as a body over the next four years. Also, please provide examples for your answers whether you are an incumbent or a challenger.

The Council has been irresponsible, particularly in financial matters.

I kicked off my 2006 campaign against the late-Marilyn Praisner with the following quote in the newspaper, "For the future prosperity of Montgomery County and its residents, it's critical that an austerity program be put in place to curtail this vicious pattern of unrestrained and unsustainable spending (The Gazette, December 2005)." Back in 2005, I recognized a Ponsi scheme when I saw it, and with disgust watched the County Council ignore a July 2006 Office of Legislative Oversight report predicting a \$1.5 billion deficit in five years, unless there were massive tax increases. Point blank, structural deficits, largely brought on by over-the-top Union Contracts hollow out our ability to feed the hungry, house the homeless, and BE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT. VOTE Tea Party Fennel, and Stop the Ponzi scheme NOW!

5. Please provide a brief assessment of the performance of the County Executive over the past four years related to environmental and quality of life issues. Supply comments if desired.

Dealing with fiscal constraints, pedestrian safety has been a priority of the County Executive; however, I give him an "F" on Housing Code Enforcement -- too little, too late. As far as growth policy which was out of whack, the late-Marilyn Praisner straightened that out past the 2006 election; however, I question the increases in impact taxes and fees. I give him an "I" for incomplete on abating traffic congestion; federal stimulus dollars widened I-270. He has tried some initiatives, like the Green Business Certification Program.

6. If you are elected, will you introduce and support legislation geared toward quality of life issues as they relate to natural resource conservation? If so, describe in the comment field what you have in mind.

Yes

We need to increase enforcement of the Child Lot Provision which allows plots to be subdivided beyond the 25-acre density. Some landowners have abused this provision. In addition, acknowledge the 25-acre benchmark is allowable, but

not a guaranteed right. In relation to sand mound technology, its intended purpose was to enable relative dwellings; consequently, we should carefully examine any expanded use of this technology. Increase receiving areas for Transfer Development Rights. Limit property tax assessments so farmers aren't driven out of business.

7. Roughly 2/5 of the land that drains into the Anacostia River is in Montgomery County. The Anacostia is one of our nation's most polluted rivers. There is a plan to clean it up that recommends 3,000 specific restoration projects, including 1,700 "low-impact," green infrastructure projects like rain garden retrofits for parking lots. Will you support Montgomery County's role in the Anacostia Restoration Plan, including in allocating necessary funds from the County budget, along with working for State and Federal funding, in order to ensure that these crucial retrofits will be built?

No

8. The 2010 stormwater permit issued to Montgomery County by the Maryland Department of the Environment is the result of a four-year collaborative effort on the part of the Stormwater Partners, DEP and other agencies. In order to ensure the success of this important pollution clean-up mandate, will you support annual increases in the Water Quality Protection Charge (now at \$45.50 per household per year)?

No

9. Our region has experienced a record number of water main breaks in recent years, some of them catastrophic, and WSSC has warned repeatedly that this trend will accelerate unless we approve the funding increases necessary to fill the massive backlog of deferred maintenance. WSSC has for many years, requested that both of its counties, Montgomery and Prince Georges, support and enact an Infrastructure Renewal Fund. While Montgomery has traditionally supported higher rate increases for WSSC than has Prince George's, neither County has yet supported or achieved establishment of the absolutely crucial Infrastructure Renewal Fund at the levels requested by WSSC. Will you support establishment of the WSSC Infrastructure Renewal Fund at the level required to rebuild and maintain our water and sewer infrastructure?

No

First, we should privatize the WSSC. Today, it's run by political appointees; that is, cronies appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. I'm reluctant to establish a new fund and always ask first, why can't the money for upgrades come out of their existing budget.

10. Montgomery County faces a conundrum when it comes to future land use. We have residential green wedges and the Agricultural Reserve to protect. In the 1980s, the county lost a significant amount of forests to development. The Forest Conservation Law has made some progress in terms of protecting or replanting forest in the Up County. However, with shifting development patterns and about 6% of land left in the county for new development, there is a need to protect trees in urban areas. What approach would you recommend increase the tree canopy in the Down County?

Smaller jurisdictions in the down county could put in place tree ordinances similar to the Chevy Chase Tree Ordinance. In addition, Chevy Chase has a native canopy tree planting program in place which could be modeled on. Infill housing zoning laws should be enforced, and we should protect our 34,600 acres of parkland. Pepco should trim trees with discretion, mindful of the type of tree and soil, and down county development should be limited.

11. What types of development would you be most supportive of from the list below? Choose two.

Redevelopment/adaptive re-use of previously developed land (Downtown Silver Spring is a good example.)

Business and industrial or technology centers

12. Ten Mile Creek in the Clarksburg area, straddles the Agricultural Reserve, and is the last best creek in Montgomery County, according to surveys by both County biologists and citizen stream monitors. Ten Mile Creek has more diversity and abundance of fish, aquatic bugs, and amphibians than other creeks throughout the County, and it is part of our Little Seneca Reservoir backup Drinking Water Supply. Montgomery County has proposed a huge bus depot and transportation equipment maintenance facility for the Ten Mile Creek watershed, near the existing County Jail. Environmental and civic groups have called on Montgomery County to find another location for the depot and to split up the dual-purpose facility if that is what it takes to protect Ten Mile Creek. Do you support moving the proposed County Bus Depot to a location outside of fragile Ten Mile Creek watershed?

No

13. As called for in the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan, Montgomery must now apply the lessons learned from Clarksburg Town Center development, including the pollution of streams and loss of groundwater, in deciding how to proceed for Ten Mile Creek. The Ad-Hoc Water Quality Working Group report was issued in July 2010 to the Council. In this report, members of civic, environmental groups and county agencies called for a Master Plan amendment (already recommended by the Planning Board in the summer of 2009) that will enable the County to apply protections proven to work in Upper Paint Branch and Upper Rock Creek. Will you support a Master Plan Amendment in order to apply necessary protections to Ten Mile Creek? Please explain why or why not.

Yes

My understanding is the Clarksburg Master Plan has a requirement to monitor water quality and to change the plan if

there's a deterioration.

14. Do you believe Montgomery County goes far enough to work collaboratively with adjacent jurisdictions (meaning other counties, cities and towns and state and federal parkland) to address environmental/quality of life concerns? Use the comment field to be more specific about our current efforts.

No, we can do more and should reach out to our adjacent counties more for information-sharing and best practices.

This is my third run for Montgomery County Council. Consistently, I've been a proponent of trying to find regional solutions, which is extremely difficult to do. Obviously, where high density areas of other counties border Montgomery County, traffic and environment concerns abound.

15. Does Montgomery County do a good job of integrated regional planning when it comes to setting the policy agenda for natural resource issues? Please explain your answer in the comment field and provide ideas as to what more we can and should be doing in this regard.

Not sure

This is more of a state function. Created in 1969, the Department of Natural Resources works to ensure the preservation, development, wise use, and enjoyment of Maryland's natural resources for the greatest benefit to the state and its citizens. The Department coordinates all natural resource activities within the state and reviews and evaluates all natural resources policies, plans, programs, and practices of county state, regional and federal agencies and institutions.

16. M-83 is a proposed highway project that could slice across parts of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, increase sprawl in the Up County, and otherwise wreak havoc on our remaining high-quality rural streams in its path. Environmental groups including Audubon Naturalist Society and local landowners, including Day Spring Silent Retreat Center, oppose M-83 and want it removed from the plans. Do you support or oppose M-83? Please state your reasons in either case.

Support

Support if absolutely necessary. Recently, improvements were made to I-270 with federal stimulus dollars. I'd examine if this lessens the need for M-83. In addition, examine alternatives like widening 355 prior to moving forward.

17. What do you think are the two most pressing issues facing Montgomery County in terms of quality of life and protection of our natural resources?

Quality of Life: Fight crime! This year, we've had 13 murders, as many as all of last year. In addition, one is three times more likely to be the victim of a crime in Montgomery County than Fairfax County. Currently, there's a shortage of police officers in the eastern part of the county. Turning to housing, we aren't doing enough in terms of Housing Code violations; that is, overcrowding of houses which increases traffic and impacts our school budget. I'm also concerned about excessive paving of yards with impervious surfaces, and illegal dumping in neighborhoods. Natural Resources: Our recycle rate is 44.2%, and a priority for me would be to see if we can improve on that rate. I'm 100 percent against the Carbon Tax. We're in economic trouble and the middle class can't take another hit to their family budgets. The coal plant in Montgomery County employs approximately 200 people. However, we fall behind the District and Virginia when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions, largely due to Maryland's three coal power plants. Consistently, I've been critical of the slap on the wrist Montgomery County's plant received several years ago due to an emission violation which began in 2003.

18. What role do you see the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission in regarding the relationship to the Council in the future? Would you like to see changes at M-NCPPC? If so, please explain in the comments field.

M-NCPPC role should be a strong partnership with Council.

Planning Board should communicate more closely with the Council.

Planning Board decisions should not be overshadowed by Council politics.

I would like to see slow growth, neighborhoods first, appointments made to the Planning Board. Consistently, throughout my three campaigns for County Council, I've been an urbanization no, slow growth candidate. For example, beginning in 2006, every campaign statement I've made concerning the ICC has been an emphatic, "ICC NO," without hesitation. We don't need higher densities in master plans and 30 story buildings at White Flint -- they will not eliminate Montgomery's structural deficits.

19. Montgomery County has been losing its street trees at a rapid pace, with the rate of replacement far below the rate of tree removal. Which of the policy options listed below do you support to replant and support a vibrant street tree program? (Check all that you support):

No Response

20. If you were to recommend budget cuts and could make cuts in one of the following program areas, which would it be? And please tell us why in the comments field.

Environmental education in county schools

Assuming I had to make cuts in one of the above areas, it would be environmental education in public schools, because this void can be filled by parents. In addition, school kids trained as critical thinkers can independently access information.

21. Please rate your level of concern on each of the following environmental issues:

	Not concerned (1)	Somewhat unconcerned (2)	Somewhat concerned (3)	Very concerned (4)
Watershed protection and stormwater management			X	
Loss of tree canopy in the County			X	
Impacts of climate change and the need for county action		X		
Condition of street trees in County neighborhoods			X	
Sustainable transportation			X	
Parks and green space preservation			X	
Energy efficiency in Montgomery County businesses and homes		X		
Smart growth land use planning		X		
Citizen involvement in environmental and quality of life issues			X	
Walkable and bike-friendly neighborhoods		X		

Other (please specify): Rate of recycling.

22. If you were to rank and prioritize the following in order of the top three most important, how would you rank these areas?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)
Watershed protection	X		
Climate change impacts			
Increasing the county tree canopy		X	
Developing alternatives to reduce the number of daily car trips in the county			X

Other (please specify): Assuming I have to rank three of the choices in descending order.

23. Montgomery County has an award-winning park system of nearly 35,000 acres. The Parks Department, under M-NCPPC, has demonstrated a strong commitment to stewardship of the wide range of natural resources within our parkland. But the County Council recently made budget cuts severe enough to endanger the continued maintenance of these resources. Do you support restoring vital funding to maintain our parks?

No

24. If you have any other environmental concerns/issues, please list them below.

A long-standing and consistent opponent of the ICC, during all three of my County Council campaigns. I'm concerned about county regulatory requirements being conformed to in the Upper Rock Creek and Upper Paint Branch special protection areas.

25. What will get Montgomery County to the target of 80% in reduction of greenhouse gases by the year 2050 that is cited in our county Climate Action Plan? Choose the following policies that you will commit to supporting.

- Increasing tree canopy to a healthy countywide percentage
- Preservation of mature tree cover throughout the county, including protection of street trees in the right of way
- Encouraging pedestrian and bicycle commuting
- Working with adjacent cities and counties on a regional plan of action
- Pressing for more state and federal funding for mass-transit projects

26. Are you supportive of the carbon tax recently passed in Montgomery County? Please tell us why you are or are not supportive of the legislation?

No

Looking at recent labor statistics, we may be going into a double dip recession. This is a job-killing measure, which has the potential to squeeze already tight profit margins of small businesses thus discourage hiring.

27. The current Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law only applies to tracts of land that are 40,000 square feet or larger, approximately one acre. Would you consider lowering the threshold to protect more forest?

No

28. Please tell us what you would consider to be a reasonable threshold for triggering a forestry law.

One acre equals 43,500 square feet; consequently, I feel 40,000 square feet is a reasonable trigger.

29. Have environmental concerns changed your voting patterns in the areas listed below? If you are not an incumbent, then please skip to the following question.

	Yes	No
Watershed protection	X	
Green building and Low Impact Development or LID	X	
Climate change impacts in and around Montgomery County	X	
Increasing tree canopy	X	
Energy efficiency	X	
Land use planning	X	
Pedestrian safety	X	

Other (please specify): Not an incumbent, so please skip. I have no voting patterns.

30. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I would vote to support legislation that would strengthen tree and forestry laws in Montgomery County.			X	

31. If you are not in favor of adopting stronger tree and forestry legislation, please explain your position and how you have come to this conclusion.

N/A

32. Should the State have more jurisdiction to regulate natural resources in Montgomery County?

No

Montgomery County has had a proud tradition as a national leader in protecting our natural resources. I wouldn't want the state to water down the efforts of the citizens of Montgomery.

33. Does the county need to be more active in terms of educating residents about energy consumption? If yes, please provide ideas as to how.

No

During these times of tight fiscal constraints, in all good conscience, I can't commit to this additional expenditure.

34. What are the solutions to addressing the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay? What role should Montgomery County residents play, if any?

The American Recovery and Investment Act of 2009 allocated \$95.7 million to Maryland to restore the bay. The President, via Executive Order, placed the federal government at the head of bay restoration efforts. In addition, the two United States Senators from Maryland have spearheaded multiple pieces of legislation to restore the bay. I would recommend residents donate to the Chesapeake Bay Trust and purchase Treasure of the Chesapeake license plates; approximately 90 percent of the purchase price helps restore the bay. Or, volunteer for the newly established Chesapeake Conservation Corps Program.

35. Can you recommend a proposal for action within the legislative and Executive branches of government in Montgomery County to address Chesapeake Bay restoration?

I would concentrate on keeping our house in order on the front end; that is, put in place slow growth policies, and maintain our farmland. Increase fees for illegal dumping and sediment control violations. In terms of the Water Quality Protection Charge, which funds the Rainscapes program, we need to make sure we're getting the biggest "bang for the buck." We're blessed with over 100 non-profits involved in stream clean up. I would encourage volunteerism, non-profit/corporate partnerships, and use my office as a "bully pulpit" to encourage activism.

36. Please provide any additional comments you care to provide.

Question #7: I'm not opposed to the Anacostia Restoration Plan per se; however, until Montgomery County's chronic structural deficits are addressed, in good conscience, I can't promise to vote to fund this, or an array of other worthy projects. I won't make false campaign promises. However, Montgomery County is dedicated and committed to the effort. Question #8: The Water Quality Protection Charge is a fee, not a tax. I'm not opposed to fees being adjusted for inflation. Question #19: I'm not opposed to a 1-1 replacement, as long as it's not required at the same location. I'm concerned if a street tree is in front of a home, for example, there may be sensitivities related to the location and type of tree, and the Council asserting their will on individuals. Question #23: In these times of tight fiscal restraints, I won't make a false campaign promise which I might not be able to keep. Question #30: I'm not opposed to having a discussion about lengthening the nurturing time for new trees, relying on the advice and counsel from professional Arborists.

37. Please fill in your name.

Name - Mark D. Fennel

