



Valerie Ervin (D), Montgomery County Council, District 5 Incumbent

## 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?**

Yes

**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:**

Increasing Montgomery's share of payments to WMATA to further fund the needed infrastructure improvements and maintenance backlogs.

Supporting a region-wide gasoline tax to create a dedicated infrastructure fund for Metro.

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

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 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.**

Overall, the Council made tough decisions in a highly unfavorable economic situation.

I deserve a second term on the Montgomery County Council because I have fully represented the residents of District 5 while making significant progress on issues that affect Montgomery County. I have been able not only to deal with day-to-day issues associated with being a district councilmember, but have also worked on large policy goals. I have cultivated good working relationships with my Council colleagues, staff in County agencies and departments and residents. I know how to get things done and advocate on behalf of what is right regardless of political consequences.

**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.**

I would prefer not to answer.

**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

I would support legislation that relates to natural resource conservation. In my opinion, the Council needs to lead by example. There are still tremendous benefits to be gained through energy conservation in terms of reducing greenhouse gases, heat island effects, mass transit and localized air quality.

**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?**

Yes

**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)?**

Yes

**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?**

Yes

I support these increases as long as improvements are measured, documented, and put to their intended use.

**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?**

We need to determine the existing canopy coverage. The Planning Department has started an initiative, which I support, to map the tree canopy as a GIS layer to monitor the health of the tree canopy. I also support the use of a forest mitigation bank program to help bring more tree cover into the county right-of-way because it has the double benefit of mitigating noise and air pollution closer to the source. This approach would also get street trees in place sooner than County funding would achieve. Finally, I believe that we need to increase funding for the Planning Department's "Leaves for Neighborhood" program that provides financial incentives for property owners to plant new trees on their property.

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

New residential development clustered around mass transit with adequate ratios for workforce or affordable housing

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?**

Yes

**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

I support a master plan amendment. The Clarksburg Master plan was approved in 1994. Since that time, residential units have increased in size and this has increased the land disturbance. By looking at the master plan we could incorporate environmentally friendly and affordable housing options using less land.

**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.

In my opinion, we can always learn from our neighbors. While we have many tremendous assets in Montgomery County, we need regional collaboration, especially on issues like protecting our water and air quality. Regional cooperation is needed to ensure our long-term sustainability.

**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.**

Yes

We can always do more; however, Montgomery County is a leader in natural resource planning and protection. Unlike other jurisdictions, we have restrictions on building in floodplains and controls on building in stream and wetland buffers. We need to do more to get individuals to take mass transit and to consider options like carpooling and teleworking.

**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.**

Oppose

**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?**

There are several issues affecting our quality of live and the protection of our natural resources in Montgomery County but for me air quality issues associated with traffic congestion and housing affordability rise to the top of the list. This is why its so critical to focus on making public transportation options attractive and convenient for our residents. This is why I am a proponent of the Purple Line and Bus Rapid Transit and have worked with environmental and bike advocates to enhance our trail system. We also have to improve our stock of affordable housing because longer commutes result in greater negative impacts on our environment.

**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 decisions should not be overshadowed by Council politics.

Park and Planning reports directly to the County Council and must provide unbiased and non-political advice to Council members. Most Councilmember are not planning and zoning experts, and we need advice and guidance from the Planning Board and residents. There are times when the Council does not agree with recommendations made by the Planning Board; however, this advice is critical for thoughtful decision making.

**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):**

Reorganize: Take the street tree program out of DOT and move it to the Parks Department or back to DEP.

Increase the funding level of the street tree program.

**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.**

County park stewardship and maintenance

The Council made the choice to reduce funding for County Parks in this last budget cycle. My hope is that this can be corrected as the budget situation improves. All of these programs affect the County's quality of life and the environment. These programs and infrastructure needs must be evaluated in the context of the overall budget.

**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):* I am very concerned about all of the above environmental issues because they are all interconnected and affect the quality of life in Montgomery County.

**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	X		
Increasing the county tree canopy			
Developing alternatives to reduce the number of daily car trips in the county			X

*Other (please specify):* Again, all of these items are interconnected and all should be at the top of the list. Climate change influences the natural environment, reducing car trips reduces energy consumption and improves air quality, and watershed protection for streams leads to good water quality. We have to be concerned about all of these issues.

**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?**

Yes

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

**No Response**

**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
Going full scale on community and business education on energy efficiency
Implementing county-wide requirements for teleworking; requiring that local businesses allow teleworking for employees as appropriate to the type of business involved
Offering tax credits as incentives to businesses and residents reducing energy consumption
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?**

I voted for it.

**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?**

Yes

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

40,000 square feet or more

Since the forest conservation law is for the protection of forest and not individual trees and since few properties have less than 40,000 square feet of forest, I believe that this threshold is appropriate. However, if updated data shows different levels, I would consider the arguments to reduce the threshold.

**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):

**30. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
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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.**

I would need to review any proposed legislation and the fiscal and economic analysis associated with a specific proposal before making a final decision.

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

No

The state has fewer resources than Montgomery County for implementing and enforcing environmental regulations so I do not see how the state could take on a larger role. It is also important to note that Montgomery County generally has stricter standards than the state.

**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.**

Yes

Looking at best practices from other jurisdictions is a good way to begin educating residents about energy consumption. Some jurisdictions use interactive web-based tools so homeowners can calculate the energy savings associated with making energy efficient choices. For example, one jurisdiction helps homeowners calculate the savings from installing solar panels.

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

As a board member on the Chesapeake Bay Trust, I know that it is critical to address nonpoint source pollution from residential and agricultural areas. Montgomery County can do more by educating homeowners on the application of fertilizer on their yard and in common areas. We can also work with the agricultural community to ensure that they are following their nutrient management plans. Wastewater treatment facilities also play a large role in polluting the Bay. We need to commit to the cost of retrofitting WSSC sewage treatment facilities.

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

The County should evaluate nonpoint source pollution control from agricultural lands and turf grasses and create incentives to reduce the amount of turf grass by converting areas to native plants.

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

No Response

**37. Please fill in your name.**

Name - Valerie Ervin

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