

Conservation Montgomery

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Finding our Voice

Perspectives from the CM Board of Directors

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Revitalizing Green Spaces by Building a Trail

By Jennifer Chambers, Conservation Montgomery Board of Directors

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Southern Montgomery County is a densely developed and populated area with patches of green space scattered to provide recreation and respite from the active lives of its citizens. The largest green spaces in the down county are Sligo Creek Park, Northwest Branch Park, and Rock Creek Park -- all with trail systems but non connecting to each other - until now.

For two years, multiple organizations (Northwood High School, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Neighbors of Northwest Branch, Friends of Sligo Creek, MD State Highway Administration, Montgomery Parks and Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection) have partnered to build the one and half mile Northwood Chesapeake Bay Trail that connects Sligo Creek and Northwest Branch Parks. In 2009, the State Highway Administration was persuaded to bank 15 acres of public land for environmental protection. This property is adjacent to Northwood High School. It was used for many years as an unofficial community landfill. With funding from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, students and community volunteers removed 11,000 pounds of trash, built a three-quarter mile interpretive trail about the Chesapeake Bay watershed, removed invasive species and planted native trees and plants. This first phase of completion was celebrated with a National Trails Day in June 2010 with a 5K community fun run and hike.

In April 2011, volunteers constructed more of the trail to University Avenue with hopes of extending it further into Breewood Park to reach Sligo Creek Park. As lead organizations, Northwood and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club worked with Montgomery Parks and Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection for a year to gain permission and plan the trail extension. In November, 25 students and community volunteers built the half mile extension of the Northwood Chesapeake Bay Trail in Breewood Park.

The Northwood Chesapeake Bay Trail now connects Sligo Creek Park just below University Avenue (on the Parkway across from the last playground) to Northwest Branch Park at the Loxford Terrace connector trail (see photo 1). The trail is blazed in red for Northwood High School. Furthermore, it is posted with a trail sign (see photo 2) on Sligo Creek Parkway, University Ave, Northwood High School and in Northwest Branch Park.

(Photo 1 at right)



The Northwood Chesapeake Bay Trail project is a successful example of a public/private partnership which has left a positive legacy in an urban area with scattered but valuable green space. Montgomery County residents have great regard for their county parks with trails being the most valued resource. This successful public/private partnership protected land for green space and environmental education, restored land to improve the ecosystem's health including the watershed and built a recreational resource that ties the community to the land creating ownership and community pride.

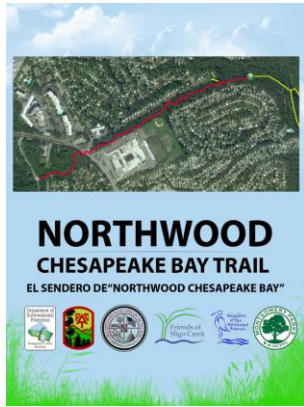


Photo 2

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