

2026 Highlights



Since 2010, Conservation Montgomery has been an all-volunteer 501c3 nonprofit. Our working board of directors accomplishes the Conservation Montgomery mission with support from donations and volunteers. Tax-deductible financial support from donors allows us to continue activities like those outlined below.

Environmental education and awareness

We continued our Home Tree Care 101 classes this year and distributed ***Healthy Trees, Healthy Communities Guide to Tree Care in Montgomery County*** by working with our partners with the County Regional Services Centers, gardening clubs and civic associations.

The goal of our **Home Tree Care 101** (HTC 101) project is to show homeowners and business owners how to care for and preserve mature trees on their private property. HTC 101 complements free County tree planting programs like *Tree Montgomery* and *Reforest Montgomery*. We held HTC 101 spring and fall classes, primarily in sections of the county where tree canopy percentage is low. Certified arborists teach these hands-on classes to help homeowners learn about caring for trees. With proper maintenance, trees can live longer and be less hazardous in severe weather. Classes are held outdoors in neighborhoods throughout the county. We thank the Montgomery County Government for supporting this program.



In May, we partnered with the Montgomery County Civic Federation to present a multi-community Home Tree Care 101 class. Five communities were represented by 17 class attendees as they walked through the Kensington Estates and Parkwood neighborhoods for a three-hour tree care class. Class organizers were Anne Gagne, from the Kensington Estates Civic Association and Bailey Condry from the Parkwood Residents Association, which are adjacent communities. Homeowners from the Linden Civic Association, Locust Grove Homeowners Association and Takoma Park also participated.



We welcomed environmentalist Rachel Teter to our board this year. Rachel is bringing fresh ideas for outreach, such as a quarterly newsletter, a book club and adding large A-frame signs at events to advertise our HTC 101 classes. She launched the first issue of the newsletter in September and held the first book group meeting in October.

Rachel also led our board of directors through a strategy session this fall to consider our role in the community and opportunities CM has for the future. We're grateful for her leadership skills.





Advocacy, lending your voice to the environment

A hot button for many communities across the United States over the past year is opposition to construction of sprawling data centers that have a negative impact on natural resources. Massive protests opposing data centers have taken place. Locally, Conservation Montgomery supports the efforts of the **Montgomery Countryside Alliance** (MCA) in campaigning against large-scale data center developments—particularly proposed hyperscale facilities in rural areas like Dickerson. There are serious concerns over water consumption, energy grid stability, noise pollution, and preservation of the county's Agricultural Reserve. Following initial executive orders and committee pushes for a pause on permits,

Montgomery County advanced an 18-month moratorium on data center development alongside a zoning text amendment (ZTA) to block facilities larger than 25 Megawatts. We signed onto a letter initiated by Food and Water Watch in support of a statewide data center moratorium in Maryland. Over 60 groups signed the letter. The goal is to get a full moratorium introduced and passed in 2027. We support this effort and will continue to follow it.

The latest national University of Massachusetts Amherst Poll has found that just 11% of Americans say they would support the construction of an artificial intelligence data center in their local community, while 65% oppose their construction.

Conservation Montgomery continues to be active with the **Montgomery County Forest Coalition**, a group of local and state environmental organizations working toward stronger forest protection in Montgomery County, with the goal of achieving a "net gain" (planting more trees than are removed) instead of just "no net loss." The Montgomery County Planning Department is proposing new amendments to the Forest Conservation Law (Chapter 22A) this fall. Some of the amendments will align the county law with changes made to the state Forest Conservation Act. Other changes are being presented by staff to make our law stronger for forests and to make the process clearer for development applications. Conservation Montgomery is following these proposals along with our partners in the MoCo Forest Coalition.

We supported the addition of 27.518 acres of land to the Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park. As an ecologically rare global geology, the park represents one of our finest achievements in conservation protection. The proposed acquisition will add more habitat to the park's diversity. We also worked with partners at the **Little Falls Watershed Alliance** to advocate for more tree protection and reforestation as the GEICO land in Bethesda is redeveloped. CM also asked that a proposed MCPS bus depot at Shady Grove Road and Cavanaugh Drive be removed from the County budget.

A County budget item for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) would have allowed clear cutting of more than 12 acres of mature forest near the Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park for a bus depot. The site is in a Special Protection Area established in the upper Piney Branch watershed. It has been identified as a Priority Urban Forest by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Though it is a threat to long established water quality protection in SPA's, the County Council approved the budget to include the depot proposal. We may still have an opportunity to save this valuable forest from destruction through the MCPS budget process. We are still following this potential loss closely.

Each year, CM testifies on the Operating Budget for our **Montgomery Parks** system. We concentrate on increased funding for maintaining conservation services and meeting natural resource needs and goals to protect, map and identify the vital biodiversity in our 37,000 acres of parkland.

This year we also requested continued support in the overall Operating Budget for our **Home Tree Care** program which we've expanded to include tree care guides in Spanish. Since it is estimated that 80% of our county tree cover is located on private property, the grants we've received through the DEP program have become invaluable in preserving and increasing our County tree canopy.

Learn more at [ConservationMontgomery.org](https://www.ConservationMontgomery.org).