



# Catoctin News

Newsletter of the Catoctin Group serving  
Carroll and Frederick Counties

Volume 7 Issue 2

Summer 2020

## Call to Action!

### Voice YOUR SUPPORT for Retaining Forests

By Harry George

***The code was relaxed in 2011 by the Blaine Young board of commissioners. As a result, between 2012 and 2019, Frederick County lost more than 480 acres of forest!***

We need you to take action now by contacting the Frederick County Council and voicing your support for Council Bills 20-07 and 20-08, which call for no NET loss of forest acreage from development, and do so before the public hearing on July 7th, but in no case later than the anticipated Council vote on July 21st.

#### Email

[councilmembers@frederickcountymd.gov](mailto:councilmembers@frederickcountymd.gov)

**Details on both bills can be found here:**

<https://frederickcountymd.gov/8013/Council-Bills-2020>

The essence of these bills is straightforward: Protecting existing forest, and require replacement of any trees cut down.

The Forest Resource Ordinance (FRO) bill readopts the 1-for-1-replacement provision of the 2007 code in order to compensate for forest clearing and maintain the county's current forest canopy. The code was relaxed in 2011 by the Blaine Young board of commissioners. As a result, between 2012 and 2019, Frederick County lost more than 480 acres of forest! Under this legislation, if an acre of forest is taken down as part of land development it must be replaced by other permanently preserved "newly planted" forest acreage that is under protective easement. That's why we refer to it as "1 for 1" or "no NET loss."



Image: Land Portal Foundation  
<https://data.landportal.info/>

The Zoning bill requires identification and evaluation of "sensitive environmental areas" (forests, floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes) and historical resources of a property during the planning stages and before any zoning reclassification.

The FRO and Zoning bills are companion bills which complement and support each other. It is important to voice your support for both bills.

#### Why is Forest Retention So Important?

Forests, in addition to their natural beauty and shelter for wildlife, provide a low cost, natural way of contributing to solving environmental concerns and problems, including:

- Protecting stream/river water quality by filtering chemical pollutant runoff, primarily nitrogen and phosphorous.
- Increasing soil retention, particularly in steeper sloped areas, through tree root systems.
- Sequestering harmful carbon dioxide from the air, and producing oxygen in return. (The Maryland Forest Service states that an acre of functioning forest produces four tons of oxygen — enough to supply oxygen for a year for 18 people!)
- The protected soil around these trees store even more carbon. (Conversely, when forested soil is disturbed through tree removal, carbon is released!)

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- Increased water retention in the soils in and around trees.

### So, What Can You Do?

Let your voice be heard! Since, at the time of this writing, public attendance at Council hearings is not yet allowed, express your support for these bills by emailing the County Council at [councilmembers@frederickcountymd.gov](mailto:councilmembers@frederickcountymd.gov), or writing a letter and mailing it to the Council (Frederick County Council, 12 E. Church St., Frederick, MD 21701). Correspondence doesn't have to be long or complicated: Simply state your name and address, and indicate your support for both bills as proposed, and ideally provide some personal reasons why you think saving forests is important. Simple enough!

All communications to the Council is counted and gets entered into the official record. Council members do listen, and do pay attention

to public sentiment and input. Like voting, **YOUR VOICE DOES COUNT!**

P.S. If you can reach out to just a handful of like-minded friends or acquaintances to do the same, you have a significant multiplier effect!



Image: Land Portal Foundation <https://data.landportal.info/>

*We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as its other creatures do.*—Barbara Ward

## THE POPE SPEAKS AGAIN

By Lewis Sherman

*... he reminds us that environmental destruction ultimately affects everyone and that we all have a responsibility to correct our errant habits.*

Pope Francis again turns his attention to the global environmental crisis. One section of a just released 225-page manual for church leaders and workers, is devoted to the excessive global reliance on fossil fuels and urges a drastic decrease in these fuel sources. Divestiture of investments in fossil fuel companies is one of the specific measures he suggests. Another is to help poorer nations pay for clean fuel technologies and environmental clean-up.

### Latest Guidance

This latest guidance follows a number of high profile initiatives by Pope Francis since 2015 to address the existential environmental crisis facing the world. The first was the 2015 Encyclical entitled "Laudato Si" (Praised Be), "On Caring for Our Common Home," which covers the gamut of global environmental concerns from water pollution to planetary warming.



Image: REUTERS/Max Rossi TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

The Pope talked at length about massive air and water pollution, loss of biodiversity, global warming, overuse of resources, and misuse of technology, out of control growth of cities, deforestation, desertification, and

resultant health impacts. See "The Pope and the Environment" in the winter 2015 edition of the Catocin Group Newsletter: [CGNewsletterWinter2015](#)

### Oil Executives

On June 9-10, 2018, Pope Francis met with some 50 oil executives and investors in the Vatican. The subject was the over dependence on fossil fuels for producing energy and the environmental

damage this is causing. He used the conference to urge the conversion to clean and sustainable energy sources. See, "Pope Francis Urges Reduction in Fossil Fuel Uses" in the summer 2018 issue of the Catocin Newsletter [CGNewsletterSummer2018](#).

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## Season of Creation

On May 23, 2019 the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development sent a letter to Dioceses, worldwide, asking them to participate in the month-long Season of Creation that was held in September 2019, and to use the opportunity to put *Laudato Si* into practice.

The Dicastery said that the invitation sent to Catholic communities was closely tied to an upcoming Synod of Bishops on the Amazon region, a vast area seriously threatened by deforestation and environmental degradation. See summer 2019 Catocin Group Newsletter:

[CGNewsletterSummer2019](#)

## Unwavering Environmental Passion

Then on June 14, 2019, the Guardian newspaper from London, reported the Pope had declared a global "climate emergency," warning of the dangers of global heating and that a failure to act urgently to reduce greenhouse gases would be "a brutal act of injustice toward the poor and future generations."



Image: Vatican Asks Catholics To Stop Investing In Fossil Fuels, And ...[www.indiatimes.com](http://www.indiatimes.com)

## Hydrogen Fuel Technology

In February 2020, the Pope held a 30 minute private meeting with John Sheffield, a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, a hydrogen fuel proponent from Purdue University. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the potential of hydrogen as global clean energy source. The fact that the Pope, leader of the 1.2 billion strong catholic world, would give this professor a 30-minute private meeting speaks to the critical importance he confers on the global environmental crisis. See [Purdue&Pope](#).

## Social Justice

An underlying theme of the Pope's focus on the environment is social justice, especially with regard to the poor. He asserts that environmental degradation frequently impacts areas inhabited by the poor, ranging from polluting industries located in poor areas to the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Nonetheless, he reminds us that environmental destruction ultimately affects everyone and that we all have a responsibility to correct our errant habits. His audience is enormous and typically obedient. As such, his continued work should have a huge impact on the future of the planet.

## Let's Not Make the Environment Another Covid-19 Victim

By Kerri Hesley

### *The evidence of COVID-19 so far clearly points to person-to-person and aerosol spread as the major pathways of transmission of the virus.*

The Covid-19 pandemic has turned our world upside down. What used to be routine, such as a trip to the grocery store, now involves significant planning for many people. Those of us who are used to bringing in our reusable bags may have been in for a surprise. At some stores, these bags are discouraged or outright banned from being used. Several jurisdictions have paused their plastic bag bans/fees or delayed implementation of planned bans.

## Front-Line Grocery Workers

The plight of grocery checkout workers should not be underestimated. These brave folks are on the frontlines, ringing up items for dozens or hundreds of people on a shift. Several reports have noted the number of deaths from Covid-19 among grocery workers. Thus, the desire to protect these workers from exposure is legitimate. However, actions aimed at

protecting workers and the public should be based on science, empirical or data-driven, rather than hysteria.

The evidence of COVID-19 so far clearly points to person-to-person and aerosol spread as the major pathways of transmission of the virus. As the CDC notes: "...it may be possible that people can get COVID-19 by touching a surface ... and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads."

## Exploiting the Situation

Never missing an opportunity to exploit a situation, however, the Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) sent a letter to the US Department of Health and Human Services urging it to "speak out against bans on these products (single-use plastic) as a public safety risk".

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The plastics industry likes to cite an old study which demonstrated the presence of bacteria in reusable grocery bags and thereby implied that these bags risk the health of consumers. This study was funded by the American Chemistry Council, and later severely rebutted by Consumer Reports. In addition, the conclusion of the study was not that reusable grocery bags should not be allowed, but rather that consumers should wash their bags, which certainly seems like good advice.

### MD Bill

The Maryland bill to ban single use plastic bags was a victim of COVID-19. It had passed the House, but ultimately failed in the Senate as the legislature adjourned early due to the pandemic. Del. Brook Lierman and Sen. Malcolm Augustine have indicated that they plan to reintroduce the



Fiona Goodall/Getty Images

bill next session. We can expect the plastics industry will use everything at their disposal to fight this bill when it is reintroduced, including false claims that we need single use plastic bags to combat this virus and other pathogens. We must support our legislators with rational arguments.

### Remaining Resolute

Managing our reusable bags is similar to maintaining a healthy kitchen. Wash the bags and do not use the same bag for raw meat as other groceries, especially raw vegetables. Wash your hands. In this time of the pandemic, we can bag our groceries ourselves. In other words, common sense measures. Most importantly, we must not allow the plastic industry to derail the progress that environmentally conscious communities and persons have made.

## MAJOR SIERRA CLUB POLICY ALERT!

To: ALL-staff, Chapter Chairs, Group Chairs, and CCL Delegates & SC Board

From: Ross Macfarlane, Board Vice President and Jesse Simons, National Program Director and Leslie Fields, National Director, Policy, Advocacy and Legal

Re: Updated Guidance on Sierra Club Positions Around Policing and Criminal Justice

Date: June 30, 2020

Changemakers,

We hope you are all safe, well, and able to be active in this critical and dangerous time. As you are all aware, recently the Sierra Club has been taking a number of public positions expressing the urgent need for justice after the murders of several unarmed Black people and expressing solidarity with racial justice groups on the front lines seeking an end to systemic racism in our society and our justice system.

We (Board Vice President Ross Macfarlane and National Program Director Jesse Simons and his designee, National Director, Policy Advocacy and Legal, Leslie Fields) have been delegated the authority by the Board of Directors to take positions on social, economic, international and justice issues that are outside our existing policy but in line with our values and mission. In the case of the support of the Movement for Black Lives demands, we also consulted with our Board President Ramon Cruz and Executive Director Michael Brune. We all agreed this was in line with our mission and consistent with our policies so on June 4th we, along with hundreds of other environmental groups, signed onto this letter. You can see the full list of signatories at the end of the letter.

On June 12th we convened the Executive Committee of the Board to confer on whether we should engage even more actively in promoting the SixNineteen Campaign for Juneteeth. The ExCom agreed with our decision, consistent with the letter we signed onto the week before and consistent with our mission to protect the human and natural environment. For more on the philosophical underpinnings of this, please see Hop Hopkins' recent Sierra article, Racism is Killing the Planet.

Thank you all for your support of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) and other frontline communities during and after the Juneteeth mass mobilization. We need to sustain this effort and continue the support for the three foundational demands of the M4BL <https://sixnineteen.com/demands/> -- 1) Defund the police; 2) Invest in Black communities; and 3) Call for Donald Trump to resign as President.



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Volunteers and staff have asked: what does it mean to advocate for “defunding the police?” This is taking different forms in different communities. As the M4BL notes in its guidance: “Defunding and divesting from the police is a strategy that looks different in every city and requires participatory engagement from the community, as well as a long-term approach to systemic change.” This article from Sierra Magazine on-line has a helpful summary of recent police defunding efforts: <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/what-does-it-mean-defund-police>

Recently there have been requests from some of our traditional allies in the Congress, state legislatures, and city governments to support various incremental police reforms such as banning chokeholds, banning tear gas, de-escalation training, ending no-knock searches for suspected drug violations etc. The M4BL has requested that all progressive allies not support these incremental reforms as stand alone efforts as they could very well undermine the need for transformative change that divests from police departments to reinvent them in way that serves the communities in a more just way and reinvesting in social services presently being assigned to police.

To respect this request, we are directing all Sierra Club entities not to support one-off incremental reforms, unless there is an accompanying statement demanding the kinds of bold, comprehensive, and transformative changes that M4BL is working to accomplish. If there is an incremental reform your local environmental justice allies or other local partners want you to support, you may do so as long as it does not undercut the efforts of M4BL and allies in that forum for more transformative change and so long as it is accompanied by a clear statement supporting divestment and investment as fundamental goals for the Sierra Club. If you have questions and seek further guidance please contact [mahyar.sorour@sierraclub.org](mailto:mahyar.sorour@sierraclub.org). As Gina Clayton-Johnson, a member of the Movement for Black Lives Leadership Team said, “We need bold, comprehensive, and transformative changes that people in the streets are calling for in this moment.”

We will be reviewing this guidance as we monitor how it plays out over the coming weeks. We are also engaging expert resources to help us refine our strategies and ensure we are being good partners and using our own voices most effectively in this critical moment. But this is a time for solidarity and transformation, not politics as usual. We welcome your feedback on this guidance. We also plan to host forums for chapter and group leaders and staff to discuss these issues and to hear from our grassroots and staff leaders. This is new for many of us and forums like this could help our leaders and our base understand the nuances of these positions and the rationale behind our solidarity. We will be seeking feedback on if, how and when to do this.

In Solidarity,

Ross Macfarlane, Vice President for Conservation; Jesse Simons, National Program Director; Leslie Fields, National Director, Policy Advocacy and Legal

Sent by: Bruce H. Hamilton, National Policy Director (he/him/his)

Sierra Club, 2101 Webster St., Suite 1300, Oakland, CA 94612

**EARTH PROVIDES ENOUGH TO SATISFY EVERY MAN’S NEED,  
BUT NOT EVERY MAN’S GREED.**



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### Further Information

<http://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/catocin-group>